Bereavement and Motivation in Three Contrasting Cultures: Britain, Japan and China

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Abstract

Bereavement is a common human experience across cultures; however, how people face and deal with their loss is also shaped by the socio-cultural background. Furthermore, bereaved people are often involved with various thoughts and actions in order to recover their ongoing lives as orderly and meaningful from loss of a loved one. Therefore, this thesis argues that motivation can be seen as a social tool that enables bereaved people to engage and negotiate with available norms and values in society to recover their meaning in their ongoing lives. In order to explore how motivation shape and are shaped by individual bereavement experiences, this thesis analyses a set of qualitative narratives from four different socio-cultural contexts, including 14 interviews from Britain, 16 interviews from Japan, 16 interviews and written narratives from China and 15 interviews from a so-called Shidu group of bereaved parents in China. By looking at how these bereaved people's reported experiences before, at and after death of a loved one, I found that they were motivated by their sense of meaning in their ongoing lives. This sense of meaning included, the sense of autonomy and independence in Britain, the primary sense of interdependence mixed with individual values in Japan, the strong sense of reciprocity in being part of family in China, and the interdependent parenthood in the Shidu groups. Further, by developing a comparative framework, this thesis explores the socio-cultural differences of these bereaved people's sense of meaning, bereavement experiences and everyday lives in relation to their motivation.

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Introduction

This thesis focuses on bereavement experience by paying particular attention to motivation of bereaved people from a sociological perspective. Indeed, losing a loved one is likely to disrupt the meaning and purpose in one's everyday life. However, bereavement, as part of the one's ongoing life, also involves various actions and thoughts that are motivated to deal with the loss and further to continue his or her ongoing life (Attig, 2011; Parkes, 1988). Furthermore, it has been documented that bereavement is socially and culturally constructed (Holst-Warhaft, 2000; Valentine, 2018; 2009c, etc.); therefore, the broad social structures can also shape and be shaped by what bereaved people feel and do, and why and how they feel and do so.

In order to capture an explicit picture of bereaved people's motivation and its relations to their everyday experiences, this study adopts a qualitative approach to interpreting reported experiences of bereavement. Furthermore, in order to shed light on the interplays between bereaved people and the broad socio-cultural structures, I study 61 cases of qualitative data from four different contexts, including 14 interviews from Britain, 16 interviews from Japan, 16 interviews and written narratives from China and 15 interviews from a so-called Shidu[1] group of bereaved parents in China. By analysing the ongoing lives reported in the data, I discuss how the bereaved people's meaning in life was constructed before the death of their loved one, how it was challenged by the dying and death and further how it was recovered and maintained after the death. In so doing, I aim to illustrate how motivation of these bereaved people shaped and was shaped by their experiences in the ongoing lives. Further, these narratives from Britain, Japan, China and the Chinese group of bereaved parents were respectively analysed and were further compared to see the socio-cultural differences of the bereaved people's sense of meaning, bereavement experiences and everyday lives in relation to their motivation.

By doing so, this study will contribute to tackling the gap between bereavement research and mainstream sociological studies by developing a motivational perspective to understand bereavement. In addition, due to the lack of bereavement research in mainland China, and more

[1] In English, it means 'loss of an only child'. This phrase is particularly referred to parents who are bereaved from loss of an only child as an unforeseen circumstance of the One Child Policy in China.

particularly, the lack of both public and academic concerns with this special group of Shidu parents in China, this study will also enhance the understanding of dying, death and bereavement in mainland China, as well as, raise the issue of 'Shidu' parents in the academia. Meanwhile, given death and bereavement as highly taboo topics in China, the methodology used in this study can also set an example to similar investigations in future.

In the thesis, I develop a sociological discussion on motivation and bereavement in three parts. Part One focuses on the background and methodology of this study, including chapter 1, 2 and 3. In Chapter 1, I review both bereavement and mainstream sociological studies. In so doing, I aim to capture a sense of the purposive behaviour of bereaved people, as well as, to identify the gap between bereavement studies and mainstream motivation research. In chapter 2, I introduce the background of cultural studies on bereavement in and between Britain, Japan and China; further, I introduce the historical and political background of the Shidu phenomenon in China and highlight the limited research on this topic. The chapter 3 is focused on the methodological discussion by explaining the philosophical stand point, the research objectives and aims and the data collection and analysis methods in this study. Part Two reports on an analysis of the bereavement narratives from Britain, Japan, China and the Chinese group of Shidu parents in chapter 4, 5, 6 and 7 respectively. By interpreting the data from the four contexts, I discuss how these bereaved people were motivated to recover and maintain their sense of meaning in their ongoing lives within each context. Part Three is designed to discuss and compare the findings from the four empirical chapters. In this part, chapter 8 develops an in-depth discussion on motivation and bereavement from a cross-cultural perspective. I start the chapter 8 from revisiting the theoretical foundation of motivation and further apply this theoretical discussion to the data from the four contexts. Further, I analysed the motivation of bereaved people in each context and compared it across Britain, Japan and China, as well as, between the bereaved Chinese people in general and the Shidu parents in particular. The chapter 9 concludes this thesis by summarising the all eight chapters and further re-emphasising the significance of researching motivation in bereavement as a means of understanding bereavement as part of people's ongoing lives.

Part One: Background and methodology

This study focuses on motivation and experiences of bereaved people in different socio-cultural contexts. Therefore, this first part of the thesis is dedicated to build theoretical and methodological foundations. The Part One consists of three chapters. Chapter 1 reviews relevant literature by reducing the gap between bereavement studies and mainstream motivation research. In chapter 2, the background of bereavement research in and between the four different cultures will be introduced. The chapter 3 explains the methodological approach to this study.

Chapter 1

Literature review: Understanding motivation in bereavement

Introduction

How to deal with bereavement is an important but complicated question in human life, involving not only the distress and frustration of loss, but also how bereaved people do things in response to those challenges in their ongoing lives. Indeed, the loss of a loved one has been found to challenge bereaved people's taken-for-granted realities (Berger and Luckmann, 1967), affecting their day-to-day lives in a range of ways. As a result, the experience of loss can question bereaved people's daily routines of interactions, as well as status and roles developed through their relationship with their loved one (Attig, 2011; Parkes, 1988). Facing the problem of disrupted daily routines and changed realities in their everyday life, bereaved people are likely to experience lack of motivation and depression (see examples, (Biondi and Picardi, 1996; Fry, 1998). Further, the reduced sense of motivation may also be considered a symptom of so-called 'complicated grief' in a psychological sense (Horowitz, Siegel et al., 1997). Whilst bereavement may involve loss of interest and lack of energy in daily activities, bereavement also has an active and dynamic dimension, in which bereaved people respond to their loss and its secondary effects through diverse and often creative ways (Bradbury, 1999; Holst-Warhaft, 2002; Marris, 1974; Valentine, 2007a; 2009b). By committing to various thoughts and actions, bereaved people tend to cope with their loss in the ongoing flow of their lives. Therefore, in spite of the potentially debilitating impact of losing a loved one, bereaved people may also be motivated to go on living without the physical presence of their loved one.

Moreover, the dynamic and motivational nature of bereavement captures the social aspect of bereaved people's experience. In coping with challenges to the continuity and consistency of their ongoing lives, bereaved people, as shown in the aforementioned studies, draw on available social values and norms for guidance on how to behave/respond in the situations that are less orderly and meaningful. Yet, it has been observed that bereaved people do not necessarily go

along with the status quo, but rather, negotiate socio-cultural norms, adapting, revising, even rejecting these, to reflect their own personal agendas (Holst-Warhaft, 2000; Long, 2004; O'Callaghan, McDermott et al., 2013; Talbot, 2002; Valentine, 2007a; 2009a). Shedding light on the dynamic and complex relationships between bereaved people and socio-cultural norms, this study aims to deepen understanding of bereavement as a social experience from a motivational perspective on the basis of reported experience of bereaved people from Britain, Japan and China. By looking at what bereaved people do, especially how they recount and explain their experience through language (Mills, 1940), this thesis researches motivation of bereaved people by asking the following questions: What motivates bereaved people to (or not to) do things? How are they motivated to interact with available cultural resources and constraints as part of their ongoing lives?

In response to the broad questions above, there is a need to place bereaved people's reactions to loss within the bigger picture of their ongoing lives. This picture includes taken-for-granted routines, changes and challenges in daily lives as well as future plans, which, to a greater or lesser extent, people tend to maintain to create a sense of consistency, continuity and stability. When facing disruptive life events, including loss, people have been found to act to solve problems and search for meaning in order to restore their daily routines by drawing on available norms and values (see examples, Holst-Warhaft, 2000; Marris, 1974; Parkes, 1986, 1988; Valentine, 2007a). It has been demonstrated in some studies that bereavement involves a multi-dimensional task of managing emotions and making sense of loss and redefining social roles, a task which takes various forms depending on personal and social circumstances (See examples, Attig, 2011; Neimeyer (Ed.), 2001; Neimeyer, Klass et al., 2014; Neimeyer, Prigerson et al., 2002; Parkes, 1988; Walter, 1996). So as to capture the dynamic, interactive and emotive picture of meaning-making in bereavement, 'motivation' is adopted here as a key concept to capture how bereaved people, as social agents, come to interact with their culture and society to recover their sense of meaning in their day-to-day lives. In so doing, this is expected not only to illustrate how culture and society shape bereaved people's experiences through providing both resources and constraints, but also to capture how bereaved people interact with socio-cultural structures to explain and justify their actions in bereavement. Furthermore, by associating bereavement experiences with actions in

daily life, this approach contributes to re-positioning bereavement as part of people's everyday world, instead of being separated from daily life.

Whilst understanding motivation can contribute to capturing a more dynamic, interactive and emotive picture of how individuals 'do' bereavement in their ongoing lives (Davies and Harre, 1990), the literature has shown discrepancies in researching motivation in the context of bereavement. On the one hand, bereavement has been approached by various disciplines, including psychology, anthropology, sociology, etc., to look at bereaved people's experience from individual, collective and social aspects. However, none of these studies have paid exclusive attention to the motivation of bereaved people. On the other hand, mainstream motivation research has primarily taken a psychological perspective to examine motivation as an inner driving force for individual behaviour, while some sociological studies have focused on the broader theoretical framework of meaning-making (Dobbin, 2009). Although mainstream motivation theories and models have been used to examine and explain people's motivation in various life circumstances, none have considered the motivation of those who are facing and dealing with loss of a loved one.

In response to no study having explored motivation in bereavement, this chapter aims to gain a fresh view of bereavement experience from a motivational perspective by reviewing the extant literature. First, given the large body of multi-disciplinary studies on bereavement, I will reinterpret relevant bereavement literature to clarify how the sense of motivation has been mentioned or outlined in different ways. By revisiting key research from individual, public and interpersonal angles, I explore how a motivational perspective of bereavement, grief and mourning can be captured. Second, I will review motivation studies to reconstruct a more explicit understanding of motivation. Starting from an overview of mainstream psychological studies, I will argue that a sociological notion of motivation is needed to capture the social nature of human actions and everyday experience. As such, I further discuss how some major sociological theories refer to motivation in different forms with reference to meaning-making, as well as, how motivation can enable us to gain a more dynamic and active insight into the emotional and social aspect of bereavement as an ongoing process of meaning-making. In so doing, this chapter will

contribute to demonstrating the importance of researching motivation for further illuminating how bereavement is socially and culturally constructed.

1. Capturing a motivational aspect in bereavement literature

Bereavement research tends to be inter-disciplinary due to the focus being on bereavement experiences *per se* rather than any particular disciplinary discourses. So far, experiences of losing a loved one have been approached by various disciplines, including psychology, anthropology, sociology and so on, from different aspects of bereaved people's lives. With regard to motivation, no existing bereavement studies have specifically addressed this, although there are implicit references in terms of considering why and how people deal with their loss in different dimensions of their life. In order to capture the motivational nature of bereavement experience, this section reinterprets relevant studies in relation to what bereaved people are expected to do or what they actually do in the following dimensions: individual (emotional or mental), collective (public) and social (interpersonal).

1.1 Grief reactions as purposive actions of individuals

Grief, seen as emotional and mental reactions to loss (Walter, 1999), has been primarily considered from a psychological perspective, by which grieving can be seen as a process oriented by prescribed coping strategies and goals for dealing with loss. Starting from a modern ideology of rationalisation and individualism, earlier psychological studies on grief tended to distinguish bereaved people's 'abnormal' and 'dysfunctional' responses from 'normal' grief reactions. Further, in order to return to 'normality', some coping strategies have been developed aiming to accomplish grief tasks and leave the deceased behind. However, with the shift towards a postmodern society, which emphasises diversity and flexibility, many studies have considered that grieving is not necessarily about following fixed strategies, but having to face and deal with loss itself as part of one's ongoing life (Walter, 2007). In spite of the changing focus, these studies have maintained the idea that grieving consists of purposive experiences through which

bereaved people recover their psychological well-being following the pain, distress and stress caused by loss. In this section, psychological theories of grief will be primarily reviewed to consider how prescribed goals, purposes, and strategies can be used to shape bereaved people's grief by looking at two large bodies of grief literature: modernist and postmodernist.

Modernist theories on prescribed coping strategies

Grief, often accompanied by intense and negative reactions, has been studied by psychologists since the beginning of the 20th Century, beginning with Freud's comparison of grief and depression (1917). Given modernist values at that time which entailed faith in rationalisation (Walter, 2007), a number of pioneers of grief research chose to look at how loss can disrupt bereaved people's lives and well-being. Their investigations included consideration of what seemed helpful for grieving and what did not. By prescribing what bereaved people might expect to experience, modernist studies of grief sought to explain and provide guidance on how to regularise various grief reactions in order for the bereaved person to recover their ability to function as a rational being.

Starting from the idea that loss of a loved one could bring potential psychological issues to bereaved people, academics tended to see grief as a task that needed to be accomplished in order to prevent pathological symptoms. In his revolutionary essay (1917) on exploring the difference between melancholia (depression) and mourning (grief), Freud's ideas were developed by other theorists to provide an influential framework of 'grief work', which emphasises the importance of relinquishing ties from the deceased and reinvesting energy into new relationship. The idea of detachment was further developed by Lindemann (1944), who argued that psychological and physiological symptoms of acute grief require 'proper psychiatric management' in order to prevent prolonged grief and other issues (ibid., p. 198). As a result, the study of bereavement became subject to the pathologising of the 'grief reaction', this being furthered highlighted by misinterpretations of Engel's article 'Is grief a disease?' (1961). Whilst Engel was originally intended to use grief as an example to conceptualise the nature of disease

without claiming ‘grief is a disease’, as pointed out by Stroebe (2015), his discussion was frequently misinterpreted to categorise grief as pathological. Further, the arguments of requiring treatment and medical intervention had impact on practitioners in relation to understanding and instructing bereaved people. As mentioned above, the psychologising and medicalising of grief led to practitioners developing coping strategies to help bereaved people regulate their experience, including the relationship with the deceased and their emotional activities, for example, encouraging bereaved people to work at severing their ties with the deceased in order to return to healthy functioning.

Based on the notion of ‘grief work’ involving withdrawing energy from the deceased and reinvesting in new relationships, research continued to look at people’s emotional reactions to the loss of a loved one by emphasising linear processes and stage models of coping. By developing an ‘attachment theory’ from researching children and their caregiver in post-war Britain, Bowlby (1969) further looked at grief as a process of breaking bonds and rebuilding attachment. Later, Bowlby worked with Parkes (1970) to identify the process of losing an attachment figure with reference to four stages, including shock and numbness, yearning and searching, despair and disorganisation, re-organisation and recovery. Through a process of searching for the lost attachment figure, the ultimate goal for the bereaved is to let the figure go and reinvest energy in future relationships. Bowlby and Parkes’ model also resonated with other stage models, such as the five stages of Kubler-Ross (1969), Worden’s Four Tasks of Mourning (Worden, 1983, 2009) and so forth. Whilst Bowlby, Parkes and Kubler-Ross all state that their models are to understand the complexities of grief reactions rather than to prescribe linear processes for bereaved people, the ideas of going through fixed stages have been adopted by many practitioners to prescribe certain goals to let the deceased go and to return normal life. In short, these models are likely to orient the bereaved by providing a process that leads to recovery from the loss.

Looking back at the body of ‘modernist’ grief studies, these coping strategies were designed to grasp complex grief reactions by generalisation and also contributed to depersonalising grief by paying attention to what bereaved people should do for individual grief, instead of what they actually do. Thus, the prescribed ‘normal’ reactions and ideal goals of moving forward seem to

provide references to grief reactions as well as justify bereaved people's experiences. In other words, the meaning that bereaved people are seeking in their grief derives from the individual psyche in the form of a stable mentality and positive emotional state (Engel, 1961; Lindermann, 1944), reflecting predominant modern western values of rationalisation and individualisation (Walter, 2007). Therefore, the aforementioned studies shed light on grief as purposive reactions, which direct bereaved people to cope with emotions and manager their behaviour to 'complete' their grief.

Postmodernist theories on diverse grief reactions

During the 1990s a shift of focus is apparent that grief studies paid more attention to acknowledging the diversity and flexibility of individual paths of grieving. That is to say, the multiculturalism has greater or lesser challenged functions of unitary and dominant traditions; instead, people are more likely to seek guidance and make meaning in their smaller sub-groups, where grief is more concerned with personal feelings rather than generalised common reactions (Walter 2007). Thus, being different from earlier studies that emphasised prescribed strategies, postmodernist research tends to see grieving as a personal experience, in which bereaved people seek their own ways to deal their own loss and get on with their lives. Justifying diversity, dynamics and the uniqueness of personal grief experiences, these theories and models show a dynamic and active picture of grief.

Whilst the idea of 'letting it go' has been influential in the academic and practice worlds of bereavement, researchers have evidenced that many bereaved people themselves have shown a need to keep relationships with the deceased. There was a changing attitude to relationships between the bereaved and the deceased at the end of the 20th century. For instance, Klass, Silverman et al. (1996) coined the term 'continuing bonds'. In contrast to the discourse of 'severing ties', the perspective on continuing bonds tends to look at how bereaved people grieve with a sense of preserving bonds with the deceased. Along with the increasing recognition of continuing bonds, the phased models mentioned above have also been updated. For example,

Worden revised his four tasks of mourning by adding that the fourth task is not to withdraw energies from the deceased, but to 'find an appropriate place for the dead in their emotional lives' (Worden, 2009).

Apart from the acknowledgement of the continuing relationship with the deceased, a growing focus on diversity and dynamics of the grief process also challenged the aforementioned approach of prescribed and phased models. Because of increasing research subjects from different cultures, social classes, genders and ages, researchers, especially psychologists, have come to realise the dynamics and diversity of grief reactions. In order to better understand individual differences in the experience of grief, Stroebe and Schut (1999) presented a dual process model of coping with bereavement, in which people oscillate between focusing on loss and getting on with their lives. Further, as highlighted in this model, the oscillation involves various thoughts and actions, by which bereaved people are oriented to either work through their painful experience of loss or rethink and re-plan their ongoing lives (Stroebe and Schut, 2010). Taking a similar approach to looking at the diversity of grief experience, Bonanno and his colleagues (2004; 2009; 2002) claim it is common that people show resilient responses in facing loss and other traumatic experience. In other words, people do not necessarily suffer from symptoms of distress and dysfunctions in life; instead, many bereaved people do keep function and carry on their lives. Whilst the resilience model does not explicitly discuss motivation, it can indicate that bereaved people are likely to be motivated to get on with life. As such, these models have shown a diverse, dynamic and motivated aspect of the grief process, in which bereaved people are directed to not only deal with their loss but also carry on their lives. Furthermore, the ideas of oscillation and resilience reflect that bereavement is not necessarily a negative and pathological experience but could also involve motivation of experiences in relation to facing ongoing lives.

Following the rising awareness of the diversity and flexibility of grief reactions in multicultural society, grief studies have also paid attention to different sub-groups of bereaved people, whose grief is defined as a unique experience depending on relationships with the deceased and other socio-culture circumstances. Being different from earlier studies generalising grief reactions largely from observations of western widows and hospital patients, post-modern studies tend to

explore reactions from different types of grief. For example, it has been found that bereaved parents may grieve differently from other types of grief in relation to unreplaceable parental roles (Klass, 1997; 1999; Rando, 1986; Riches and Dawson, 2000; Rosenblatt, 2000) as well as the potential impacts on marital lives (Talbot, 2002). In addition, hidden sorrow has also been captured by a new approach called disenfranchised grief (Doka, 2002), which has been applied to look at different minority groups regarding grief, such as gay and lesbian bereaved people (McNutt and Yakushko, 2013), women for abortion grief (Aloi, 2009) and so on. By looking at grief from different sub-groups, these studies have contributed to a sense of it as a unique experience through justifying personal feelings and actions for dealing with it.

As introduced above, compared with the modernist view, these postmodernist studies have indicated a changing view in relation to paying more attention to how people grieve, rather than how they should grieve. That is to say, the goal of grieving is no longer to return to 'normal', but to identify a personalised way of dealing with loss and carrying on living. Regardless of whether modernist or postmodernist approaches, the development of grief studies reflect how social values and expectations have shaped individual grief experiences by looking at what it means to be a person in society. That is to say, what bereavement people are motivated or expected to do largely resonates with their society and culture. Therefore, the process of understanding and explaining grief is by no means an individual task, but one of social construction involving the participation of others and interplay with the broader context.

1.2 Mourning activities as functional actions in collective dimensions

To follow up the previous discussion, social structures can shape individual grief by providing certain values and norms for bereaved people to cope with loss. In a broader sense, society itself also functions while facing loss of their members by ascribing certain expectations on bereaved people's action to ensure that society itself is in an orderly, continuous and functional state. There has been a long tradition of studying loss and bereavement from a collective perspective through death rituals and mourning customs. Anthropology has profoundly contributed to drawing a picture about how culture could shape people's actions in bereavement. Starting from

considering non-western and pre-industrial cultures, many anthropological studies paid attention to death rituals and mourning customs as transitional and functional passages (Valentine, 2006). It has been pointed out that many studies have taken a strong functionalist view, arguing that society prescribes certain rituals and customs to secure the stability and continuity of society as well as to reintegrate bereaved people (Valentine, 2006; Walter, 2008). However, a strong concern with individual agency has emerged in more recent studies, which have shown a more integrative relationship between bereaved individuals and social structures in different cultures. Whilst motivation is not explicitly focused upon in these studies, the discussions on rituals and customs have provided a strong sense of purpose for individuals' bereavement. Through the culturally prescribed customs and rituals, bereaved people can draw on socially defined meaning to adapt to their changed realties in their social lives.

Starting from a standing point of analysing human and society from a collective perspective, many anthropological studies, especially those at the early stage, tended to take a functionalist view to look at society as functional state in relation to dealing with loss of its members. Although loss of a loved one would cause changes and bring emotional challenges to bereaved people's individual lives, society also provides certain instructions for individuals to adapt to their loss in a public dimension. More specifically, in facing death of someone close in social circles, bereaved people are often left with a question of how to transit their social lives into the changed realities. This question was focused by Durkheim in his work on aboriginal tribes in Australia (1912). By researching the religious life of the tribes, Durkheim highlighted how death rituals play a significant role in reconfirming of social positions of both the deceased and the bereaved in society. In so doing, these collective practices serve not only to recover bereaved individuals' social membership in their lives, but also to preserve social solidarity and symbolise collective identity in response to the disrupted social orders due to loss of social members. Similarly, van Gennep (1960) studied death rituals as one form of 'rites of passages' regarding the transitional function of redefining the social status of the deceased and the bereaved, as well as, reintegrating the bereaved to society. Apart from the transitional function, public rituals and customs on death were also considered as a means of managing bereaved people's emotional status in a socially acceptable way. Following the functionalist view, Hertz (1907/2004) and Radcliffe-Brown (1964)

both investigated death rituals by emphasising grief reactions, espeically bereaved people's emotional tensions, can be socially defined and managed in order to restore the social order following the loss. In other words, society tends to regulate individual emotions through prescribed rituals and other practices. In addition, by taking a different angle, Malinowski (2004) paid attention to relief functions in relation that rituals serve to assure society functions healthily by relieving the anxiety of its members in relation to loss. As mentioned, the studies above have strongly shown a functionalist view on death rituals and mourning customs. According to these studies, what bereaved people do or what they are expected to do, even what to feel, are all directed by socially prescribed purposes, which aim to maintain society as an orderly and consistent state. As such, the functionalist perspective may also locate bereaved people in a passive position by indicating that they have to rely on instructions provided by the broader society to make sense of changes in their social and emotional lives.

However, some more recent studies have shown a changing concern by seeing bereaved individuals as capable social agents, who are able to interplay with the broader social structures. For example, by looking at rich rituals and practices in contemporary Britain, Bradbury captured a dynamic picture of memorialisation, in which bereaved people who often use 'creative and highly idiosyncratic' ways of looking for meaning (2001, p.221). Further, by looking across cultures, Holst-Warhaft's comparative study (2000) researched public lives of different groups of bereaved people, including mothers of disappeared children in Argentina, American families of the Vietnam War victims and gay people who lost their partner due to AIDS. Living in society where their pain and grief were not socially recognised, as reported, these bereaved people shared their grief with other bereaved people and further united to challenge social orders. Being different from the functionalist emphasis on social structures, Holst-Warhaft paid attention to how bereaved people negotiate with society as a whole by transforming their grief and rage into political and social ends. In other words, in this case, grief provided a cue or motivation for the bereaved people to make sense of their loss and justify their social situations, even instigate societal changes.

To sum up, in a collective aspect, society tends to establish expectations for the bereaved people, on which they draw to adapt to changed realities. Society as a whole tends to prescribe certain expectations to what bereaved people do and feel in relation to reintegrating its members to an orderly and continuous state. As addressed by the functionalist studies, bereaved people are expected or motivated by broader social norms and values to process their loss by transiting their social status and managing their emotions. That is to say, what bereaved people do and feel in certain rituals and customs are shaped by collective purposes in order to redefine their membership to social groups and further to preserve social orders. However, by generalising bereaved peoples' actions and feelings from the perspective of society as a whole, these studies cannot explain reasons and purposes behind diverse individual reactions in their public lives. Instead, as conveyed from the more individual-focused research, bereaved people from different socio-cultural contexts may differ regarding how to negotiate the broader structures, including how much they follow and compromise with broad cultural instructions, as well as, how much they negotiate and even reshape the socially prescribed scripts. Thus, the more recent research can show a clearer picture about why and the bereaved people interact with society, although the concept of motivation was not explicitly used to look at the interactions.

1.3 Bereavement experience as meaning-making in the social dimension

As mentioned above, the studies on individual and collective dimensions of bereavement have indicated that bereavement experience is purposive in response to disruptions to their emotional and public lives. Whilst the majority of these studies only showed a vague picture of motivation of bereaved people in different circumstances, few studies, such as, Holst-Warhaft's investivation on 'cue' for grief (2000), have also shed light on bereavement as a interactive experience, in which bereaved people are motivated to interact with broader society to serve their own purposes. Therefore, by understanding how bereaved people interact with others and broader structures in their social lives, it is likely to gain more details about motivation in the context of bereavement research.

Many bereavement studies, such as works from Holst-Warhaft (2000); Valentine (2007a; 2009a), Bradbury (1999) and Rosenblatt (2013), have argued that bereavement experiences involve different parties and social discourses so as to make meaning of their ongoing lives. By being positioned in-between individual and public lives of bereaved people, these studies have contributed a more integrative view of bereavement as part of everyday lives. In referring individual lives to broadened contexts of family, community and society, researchers have drawn a picture regarding how the loss may impair various aspects of their daily lives and also how bereaved people are motivated to take actions to recover their lives within a specific social context. Furthermore, meaning-making has been seen as a key notion to understand bereaved people's interplay with their social circles for the sake of recovering consistency and continuity of meaning in their everyday lives, as well as, redefining their identities in their social ones.

Recovering meaning in ongoing lives

There has been an ongoing debate on meaning-making in bereavement, which concerns how bereaved people tend to recover their everyday life. It has been argued that, as active agents, people do not necessarily remain passive in relation to the impact of disruptive and challenging life events, but rather, they may act to seek solutions by searching for meaning to recover their ongoing lives. In his biographical narratives on experiences in a Nazis concentration camp, Frankl (1959) documented how people could seek meaning in extreme conditions and how that meaning was likely to be found in small moments of living. Whilst Frankl paid more attention to fear of death, dehumanisation and other cruel life circumstances in extreme conditions, the loss of hope and meaning in life is also relevant to other difficult situations, including loss and bereavement.

In facing loss of a loved one, the meaning that bereaved people once have taken for granted may no longer be able to explain their current life and further to plan for their future life. Therefore, as will be introduce below, bereaved people tend to recover the meaningfulness for their current and future lives. By comparing bereavement, amputation and terminal illness, Parkes (1988) argued how such experiences could threaten people's 'assumptive world', an internal model of

world including people's interpretation of past experience, explanation of current life and expectation of the future. Further, he introduced a notion of 'Psycho-Social Transitions', in which people are involved with a process of adapting to major life changes. More particularly in relation to bereavement, being inspired by Bowlby's attachment theory (1969), Parkes defined bereavement as a consecutive and interactive process, where bereaved people tend to revise their assumptive world, which has been built on the attachment to the deceased, in order to construct a meaningful future for themselves. Similarly, Attig (2011) proposed grieving as 'relearning the world', whereby bereaved people do not only actively create new meaning, but also find existing meaning from available socio-cultural norms. Furthermore, he developed Parkes's discussion on PST by pointing out that the 'assumptive world' of bereaved people is shattered in relation not only to beliefs or cognition, but also to other aspects of lives, such as, social and practical lives. Therefore, bereaved people tend to 'relearn' how to recover their sense of meaning in different aspects of their ongoing lives in relation to rebuilding daily life routines.

As such, in order to recover meaning, bereaved people may be involved with multi-dimensional tasks, by which they seek to rebuild their daily routines. As highlighted by Marris's study (1974) based on interviews with London widows in the 1950s, the process of adapting to loss involves emotional, economic, social and practical dimensions of ongoing lives, whereby people tend to rebuild structures of meaning in response to the loss of attachment to the deceased. With a similar focus on contemporary British society, Valentine approached reported bereavement experience from a cultural view by shedding light on how bereaved people tend to 'use available cultural forms to construct and express meanings that are particular and personal to them' in different dimensions in their everyday lives (pp.2, Valentine, 2007a). By further adopting a cross-cultural perspective on everyday details of bereavement in Britain and Japan (Valentine; 2009b; 2013; 2018), she highlighted how people from both countries appear to cope with their loss by drawing on social norms from each society. Particularly looking at competing discourses in Japanese society, including traditional and contemporary values and customs, Valentine's studies provided a complex and ambivalent picture of meaning-making in bereavement, reflecting how the Japanese bereaved people tended to draw on competing socio-cultural discourses as both resources and constraints in their emotional, family and social lives (Valentine, 2009a; 2009c;

2010). Meanwhile, as reported, the diverse and often innovative ways of seeking meaning also illustrate the sense of meaning reconstruction shapes bereaved people's actions by motivating bereaved people in certain socio-cultural contexts to exercise their agency to negotiate with broader structures.

Redefining identities in different aspects of lives

Apart from challenges to the consistency of meaning, loss of a loved one has been found to threaten people's sense of identity, which has been considered in some studies as social descriptions of meaning that bereaved people ascribe to different aspects of their lives (Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Giddens, 1991). In general, as representations of broad values and expectations regarding inter-personal relationships, identities contribute to explaining who people are as well as providing meaning to justify situations by referring to others and social communities. In bereavement, losing a loved one as a significant part of one's everyday life may strongly challenge bereaved people's social relationships with others, including with the deceased. As such, the sense of who one is may be impaired in some social relationships. As a result, the one may face loss of meaning in some circumstances, in which they can no longer use their identities as sources of meaning to make sense of changed realities. As will be reviewed in the following, dealing with loss also involves redefining their own identities in relation to others, including the deceased and other people in their ongoing lives.

In facing loss, bereaved people inevitably encounter a question of how to understand the changing relationship with the deceased in relation to themselves. Whilst some psychological models, as discussed above, advocate the need of severing ties with the deceased, many studies have found that bereaved people actually tend to actively negotiate with social structures to continue relationships with the deceased. As one of pioneers drawing attention to persisting relationships as strategic actions, Unruh (1983) argued that how the dying person deliberately preserve his/her identity before death for their survivors, as well as, how the survivors selectively choose to redefine the dying person's identity and to preserve attachment through various activities and symbols. By taking a similar view, Klass, Silverman et al. (1996) developed a

'continuing bonds' theory, which challenged the long-standing idea of breaking ties in psychology by emphasising how continuing bonds with the deceased can contribute to redefining bereaved people's own identities in their ongoing lives. In order to preserve bonds and interactions with the deceased, as shown by many studies on the continuing bonds in different contexts, bereaved people tend to adopt various ways, including traditional and creative ones, by negotiating with their socio-cultural discourses (see examples, Goss and Klass, 2005; Klass, 1993; Klass, Silverman et al., 1996; Valentine, 2018)). Moreover, based on reviews of 'sense-making' and 'benefit-finding', Neimeyer, Klass et al. (2014) developed a grief model of self-narratives, by which bereaved people employ language as devices to integrate the deceased's identity into their sense of individual being as well as social being. With a similar focus, Walter (1996) also reviewed bereavement literature regarding the purpose of grief and proposed 'a new model of grief', where the 'purpose is the construction of a durable biography that enables the living to integrate the memory of the dead into their ongoing lives' by principally making conversation 'with others who know the deceased' (ibid., p.7). By looking at bereavement and identity in Britain and Japan, Valentine's study (Valentine, 2007a; Valentine, 2008; Valentine, 2013) shed light on how social presence of the deceased shapes bereaved people's ongoing lives, whereby they tend to revise their identities with references to retaining those of the deceased.

In addition to dealing with the relationships with the deceased as a central task, bereaved people may also have to face and interact with other people to recovering their social identities. By reporting grief in urban Senegal, Evan et al. (2016) illustrated a diverse and interactive picture of dealing with loss as a multidimensional experience. According to their in-depth investigations, bereaved people in Senegal tended to work with different parties in their emotional, material, economic and practical dimensions in order to recover their social relationships and rebuild their everyday lives. Other studies have looked at particular types of loss in relation to how bereaved people face and deal with their relationships with the deceased and others in certain situations. For example, by focusing on a particular type of parental loss, Rando (1986); Riches and Dawson (2000); Rosenblatt (2000) have shown how bereaved parents preserve and redefine their parenthood with their deceased child(ren), while they re-adjust their relationships with their remaining child(ren) and their partner in different situations in their ongoing lives.

As mentioned above, many studies have approached bereavement from an interpersonal perspective, referring to an interactive process of preserving bonds with the deceased and redefining relationships with others in various life aspects. By considering bereavement as a process of meaning-making, the studies above have shed light on bereaved people's intentions and how they exercise agency in interacting with broader society to recover their sense of meaning following their loss. Given the ongoing flow of everyday life, bereaved people have been found to recover their once taken-for-granted meaning by relearning the changed world and integrating their loss into their current and future lives (Refs?). Furthermore, the meaning in question largely reflects and is also shaped by relationships with others in certain situations. Therefore, recovering meaning for bereaved people is to redefine their relationships with the deceased and other people. In so doing, as relational beings, bereaved people are likely to integrate these changed social relationships into their sense of self. More fundamentally, by redefining their own identities in reference to other people, bereaved people can reclaim their membership in different social groups from which they are able to draw on meaning to justify their experiences and continue their ongoing lives after the loss of a loved one. In other words, what bereaved people do is primarily directed to recover their sense of meaning by redefining their own identities in association with relationships with the deceased and others.

1.4 Summary

The studies reviewed above have to a greater or lesser extent captured how bereavement has a motivational aspect. It is commonly agreed by researchers from different disciplines that the reactions of bereaved people involve purposive actions orientated by certain mechanisms. Moreover, bereaved people's experience and their motivation have often been considered at different levels. At an individual level, traditional psychological theories tend to prescribe certain purposes to grief, such as responding in a way that conforms to perceptions of what is healthy. Conversely, postmodernist theories prioritise the diverse and dynamic aspects of bereavement and would appear to address the purpose of 'grieve; is to deal with their personal feelings and to rebuild their own lives. At a collective and public level, functionalist anthropological studies

particularly offer an overview of purposes and motivation of individual bereaved people to sustain the continuity and coherence of society as a whole. However, some recent research has drawn more attention to individual intention of bereaved people by illustrating how they can be motivated to interact and influence society. Further, at a more social and interpersonal level, many bereavement studies approach bereavement as an interactive process of recovering meaning and redefining identities. According to the above studies, bereavement experiences may involve actions shaped by certain scripts from psychological, public and social dimensions of their lives to adjust to the loss of a loved one.

From a motivational perspective of bereavement, as argued in this section, what bereaved people feel and do largely conform to what is considered 'meaningful'. In facing disruptive and distressing experiences, bereaved people are likely to draw on available socio-cultural norms in order to make sense of their loss and restore their lives as orderly, functional, therefore, meaningful. Motivation, referred to by Mills (1940) as reasons for actions, captures the dynamic aspect of how bereaved people engage with different scripts at different levels of their lives in order to make sense of their experience. More specifically, studies looking at individual dimensions of grief illustrate how motivation shapes the bereavement experience by justifying bereaved people's various reactions to loss. Subsequently, studies of public and collective loss indicate how social expectations shape individual bereavement through motivation, which embodies and represents social rules. Furthermore, studies of interpersonal dimensions of bereavement contribute to a more interactive perspective on motivation as involving meaning-making and redefining identity; as such, motivation integrates individual actions and social norms through social interactions. In summary, the study of bereavement from different dimensions, has shed light on a possible approach to bereavement through exploring motivation. By providing an active and dynamic perspective on meaning-making, motivation can be studied to gain a more dynamic view of bereavement as a social experience involving both bereaved people and their society. However, no studies have considered motivation in bereavement and how it shapes bereaved people's experiences; meanwhile, the definition of motivation still remains unclear in a social sense. Therefore, it is necessary to gain deeper understanding of motivation as a socio-cultural construction in relation to bereavement.

2. Theorising motivation

While motivation can contribute to exploring bereavement as a dynamic and interactive experience, existing research on motivation has provided limited understanding of motivation in bereavement. Motivation, in an everyday sense, is often used to reflect the meaning and reasons attached to a person's actions. Existing research has also investigated relationships between motivation and actions in different contexts. As the primary discipline concerning human motivation, psychology has investigated internal mechanisms of human behaviour in relation to classifying and stratifying needs. Indeed, motivation in psychology is associated with individual actions, not only as an internal driving force for activating behaviour, but also as closely related to a person's identity, interpersonal relationships and socio-cultural environment. As such, psychological theories provide a limited a view of the social aspect of motivation and further bereavement. In contrast, sociology's concern with individual-societal relationships has enabled a more interactive perspective of motivation and bereavement, though sociological discussions on motivation remain implicit and incomplete. In this section, I aim to reach a more explicit understanding of motivation as a social construction by critically and constructively reviewing relevant studies.

2.1 Psychological understandings of motivation as an internal force

There has been a long tradition in human history of exploring the reasons for human behaviour. Since classic debates of Plato and Aristotle, the attempts to explain human actions have been conducted in different fields, including philosophy, theology and so on. By reviewing 'historical trends of motivation research', Heckhausen (1991) has shown how psychology has been developed as the main discipline for examining human motivation in modern society. Furthermore, as a discipline focusing on human mind and individual psyche, psychology has approached motivation from different perspectives and contributed to its understanding as an internal direction to individual behaviour.

Focusing on the internal structure of behaviour, psychology, since its early period, has paid attention to what strikes people to act in different ways. From classical debates on instincts (Freud, 1915,1925; James, 1890) to the framework of drive-reduction (Hull, 1943), many theorists have classified determinants of behaviour as predefined basic needs, instincts and drives. By taking the focus on an internal driving force further, some theorists, represented by Maslow (1968), have differentiated human needs by placing them in a hierarchical order. Furthermore, while continuing to focus on needs, some theorists have sought to understand behavior more cognitively. For example, motivation has been attributed to an internal process of detecting information and learning through action (Festinger, 1962; Gollwitzer and Bargh, 1996). Meanwhile, from a neuropsychological approach, motivation is closely associated with the physiological functions of brain, which mediate changing stimuli through certain behaviour to gain rewards and achievement or avoid loss and punishment (Corr, DeYoung et al., 2013; Simpson and Balsam, 2016). Yet, the focus on individual motivation and its relationships with behavior neglects how motivation is profoundly shaped by external environments. For example, in bereavement, research has highlighted social and cultural diversity and the important role of culture in how people grieve and come to terms with death and loss in their lives (2014; Holst-Warhaft, 2000; Klass, Silverman et al., 1996; Valentine, 2007a; 2009a; Walter, 1999). While individual needs and the internal construction of behavior are important, these can only be understood within the norms and values of a person's culture and how that person negotiates these.

Given the interactive relationships between human actions and external environments, an approach that underlines the influence of external environments on individual motivation and behaviour can enable us to gain a more comprehensive picture of motivation not only as an internal affair but also a social product. Although some psychological motivation theories do discuss the environmental influences, the ideas tend to be implicit and discontinuous. For instance, cognitive theories (Festinger, 1962; Gollwitzer and Bargh, 1996) and neuropsychological frameworks (Corr, DeYoung et al., 2013; Simpson and Balsam, 2016) focus on how inner mechanisms respond to external changes, such as rewards or penalties, in relation to different behaviour. However, according to this perspective, behaviour is heavily dependent on internal

structures rather than the external environment. Compared with the aforementioned theories, a social-psychological framework, called the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci and Ryan, 1985; 2000), places more emphasis on the social and cultural factors of motivation and behaviour. By arguing humans are intrinsically or extrinsically motivated to varying extents, the theory associates motivation, behaviour and well-being with basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness. Stronger satisfaction of the three needs lead to a higher level of the intrinsic motivation for self-interests, pleasure and enjoyment; otherwise, a more extrinsic motivation occurs in relation to external pressure and even rewards. In other words, the theory acknowledges the impact of external environments in supporting or undermining basic needs. Furthermore, many studies have examined and applied the SDT theory in different contexts and cultures by looking at how different socio-culture contexts can either support or undermine individual motivation, behaviour and well-being (Carr, 2008; Chirkov, 2003; La Guardia, 2000; etc.). As such, the studies based on the SDT theory have highlighted that motivation can be socially shaped. However, in these studies， it is still assumed that motivation originates from an internal mechanism and humans are fundamentally self-driven, independent and self-motivated.

Whilst the aforementioned approach represents only a small proportion of what psychology has to say about motive/motivation, it has captured a general trend in psychology that strongly suggests that one's actions and experience of everyday life are determined by an internal structure of response stimulus, though the stimulus could be attributed to external changes. However, this approach reflects the norms and values of contemporary western, mainly Anglophone societies, which prioritise individualism over interdependency. Given this thesis examines and compares Britain with Japan and China where norms and values emphasise relationality and interdependency, the definition of motivation needs to capture the implications of these differing normative emphases in relation to both bereavement and motivation. In addition, by psychologising individual experience, psychological studies tend to assess human motivation by distinguishing 'positive' motivations from 'negative' or 'pathological' ones. As a result, motivation, as a criterion for a 'healthy' psychological state, is perceived as being subject

to improvement in various settings (Chirkov, Ryan et al., 2003; Chirkov, 2009; Ferguson, Kasser et al., 2011; Gagné, Forest et al., 2015; Soenens, Park et al., 2012).

In summary, the above studies offer a range of detailed explanations of motivation as an inner psychological condition of the individual, including both healthy and pathological forms. This approach tends to lay less emphasis on the social and cultural contexts in which individuals interact and construct their worlds. Therefore, it is necessary to explore motivation and human actions further to explore how motivation continuously mediates one's actions with interpersonal relationships and the broader society. Especially, in the case of bereavement, motivation provides a key concept to understand the dynamics and complexities of bereavement as a social and ongoing experience in relation to not only what bereaved people commit to doing (or not to doing), but also why and how they commit to doing so in light of the norms and values of their own socio-cultural contexts. I therefore draw attention to some sociological approaches that offer a more dynamic and interactive understanding of the social aspect of motivation.

2.2 Sociological approaches to meaning-making

In applying a sociological perspective, it is possible to explore the interactive, dynamic and ongoing relationships between social structures and individual actions. Compared with psychological research, sociological studies are more concerned with how motivation is socially and culturally constructed, shaped and applied (Blum and McHugh, 1971; Schutz, 1974; Weber, 1964; 1978). However, instead of focusing on motivation *per se*, mainstream sociological research has tended to focus on a broader framework of meaning-making, referring to processed in which people contribute to stabilising social systems, as well as to explaining and justifying their experiences. In mainstream sociology, the concept of meaning-making has been used to understand relationships between the individual and society; some theorists emphasising society, some the individual and others the interaction between the two. In this section, I will review a range of sociological theories to address how meaning-making is approached from different perspectives to understand mechanisms of social interactions. Further, I will point out how these meaning-making frameworks can contribute to a sociological understanding of motivation.

By emphasising the power of social systems to shape individual actions, functionalist sociologists, including Durkheim and Parsons, have approached meaning-making by seeing it as a means of maintaining social order. Starting from Durkheim's idea, meaning is produced, maintained and recovered in social interaction based on a sense of what Durkheim called 'collective consciousness', which refers to a set of shared beliefs, values and norms (Durkheim, 1933; 1982). More specifically, in his study on suicide in Europe, Durkheim pointed out how the sense of social solidarity, including social interactions and feelings of belongingness to society or communities, plays a central role in providing meaning to people's lives (Durkheim, 1897/2005). Further, by looking at rituals and religious practices in aboriginal tribes in Australia, he highlighted, the fundamental functions of rituals in maintaining social solidarity and order, through which the aboriginal people found meaning to face changes in life and continue their everyday lives (Durkheim, 1912). Further, by adopting a structural-functional view, Parson (1937/1968) analysed social actions and their relation to social systems. He considered actions to be oriented and constrained by shared values and norms, representing the social order, the relationship between these social norms and individual actions showing how individual actions can contribute to maintaining social order and stabilising social systems. As mentioned above, functionalist discussions tend to see meaning for individual actions is largely shaped and even determined by broader structures in order to respond to the needs of social systems to maintain social orders.

Being different from the functionalist approach considering meaning-making in macro contexts, Weber developed an interpretative approach to the actor's point of view to explore the subjective meaning of their social action (Weber, 1978). Further, he discussed how individuals attach meaning to their conduct in social situations and how that meaning reflects predominant societal discourses. Based on his classification of four ideal types of social actions - traditional, affective, value rational and instrumental value actions - Weber showed particular interest in instrumental-value actions, arguing that efficiency and rationalisation in modern society have replaced traditional values to shape subjective meaning and individual actions. As more clearly illustrated in his work on the protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism (1905/1992), he argued that protestant thoughts, especially Calvinism, contributed to the emergence and development of capitalism by transforming hard work into economic activities as a means of easing their

'salvation anxiety'. In his book on the sociology of religion, he highlighted that the need for salvation was crucial in shaping believers' actions both in rituals and everyday life (Weber, 1964; Kalberg, 1990). In discussing meaning and social actions, Weber emphasised both the importance of subjective meaning for understanding society and social change and how meaning is constructed by individuals to reflect shared values and norms. In referring to salvation anxiety he also made implicit reference to emotion in motivation (Weber, 1964).

As mentioned above, some sociological theories have emphasised social control in meaning-making by highlighting how individuals take actions to conform to social structures. However, influenced by Weber's emphasis on meaningful social action, other theorists adopted a more individual-centred approach by looking at how individual meaning can contribute to creating and recreating social structures. As the founder of the social interactionism approach, Mead considered how the sense of self is developed in social interactions, through which individuals learn meaning from others via symbols; further, he argued what people do is produced on the basis of what they have learned (Mead, 1934). Later, Blumer continued his teacher Mead's work by further developing symbolic interactionism (1986). According to Blumer, individual actions are built upon the meanings that actors give to certain things or people. By employing language as a primary means of negotiating meaning, people can modify their meaning by exchanging and sharing symbols with others. Further, social structures are created and recreated on the basis of shared meaning through social interactions. In summary, symbolic interactionism theorists, as represented by Mead and Blumer, have given individuals the same importance as society in relation to creating meaning. However, these theories tend to primarily look at small scale interactions between individuals rather than large-scale structures. As a result, individual contributions to creating social structures are overestimated rather than the two-way relationships between individual subjective meaning and shared social norms.

As introduced in this section, mainstream sociology has approached meaning-making and its relation to actions by prioritising either social structures or individual meaning-making. Whilst these theories have shown that meaning-making can be approached from both macro and micro perspectives to shed light on reasons of actions, they do not highlight meaning-making as a co-construction between individuals and broader structures. Also, as implied by Weber and made

more explicit by more recent theorists[2] (see example, Hochschild, 1983), this interactive process involves an emotional component which, far from being an internal state, is profoundly social. In relation to bereavement and grief, this emotional dimension is self-evidently important. Therefore, in order to capture the interactive and emotional nature of meaning-making and actions, an understanding of motivation will be introduced in the next section to illustrate how individuals, through their emotions and actions are motivated to interact with society, how society shapes these emotions and actions and how individuals may actively negotiate and even reshape social structures.

2.3 Motivation as a dynamic, interactive and emotive perspective of meaning-making

So far, I have reviewed a range of theories and frameworks in psychology and sociology to show how human actions can be understood from both individual and social perspectives. However, these understandings of motivation seem incomplete in failing to provide a comprehensive and interactive picture of how individuals are personally and socially motivated and how the interplay of the individual and society can shape how people are motivated to search for meaning in their ongoing lives. Therefore, this section will explicate a fuller understanding of motivation with reference to sociological literature. Since there are no systematic discussions on motivation in sociology as mentioned above, this section will integrate discussions of motivation from various theories primarily from a social constructionist perspective. In so doing, I aim to capture how people's actions, including how they make sense of these are constructed through social negotiations in their everyday lives. More specifically, I will start by proposing a sociological notion of motivation regarding how motivation is constructed in social interactions, how it is linked to the sense of identity and, as implied by Weber (1964), has an emotional component, which represents our emotional investment in our world and in each other and the emotional labour this requires (Hochschild, 1983; Valentine, 2013). Further, I will explore how changes and

[2] Though these theorists do not make reference to motivation.

challenges in life, such as bereavement, the emotions these evoke and the meanings we give to them may shape motivation and actions. In so doing I aim to contribute a more explicit understanding of motivation, which captures a dynamic, interactive and emotional (as well as cognitive) picture of meaning-making.

Social construction of motivation

To follow up the sociological discussions above, motivation can be seen as a social means of attaching meaning to actions, reflecting both social values and expectations as well as individual subjectivity, both its passions and cognition. To understand motivation in the complexities of interactions and negotiations between individuals and society, it requires a comprehensive approach to exploring how motivation is constructed and reconstructed in social interactions and how motivation is applied to shaping individual actions. However, existing literature can only provide limited understanding of the complexity of motivation. Apart from the aforementioned theories on the broader framework of meaning-making, there are also a small number of sociological studies, which have directly discussed motivation. Whilst these discussions attempted to understand how people are motivated in social aspects, they tend to conceptualise motivation as a straight-forward, psychological mechanism in response to certain social needs (Alsted, 2001; Turner, 1987) and tendencies (Parsons, 1951). In contrast, this section aims to interpret motivation in the context of social interaction, as well as in people's ongoing lives. In order to do so, social constructionist theories will be reviewed and integrated alongside some social psychological theories to shed light on how motivation is constructed, applied and reshaped in the ongoing process of people's everyday lives.

Starting from a phenomenological view, Schutz (1967; 1974) focused on human actions in his discussion of life worlds by explaining human action as being motivated by a 'complex of meaning' (Weber, 1905/1992) in a spatial-temporary dimension. By differentiating human motivation into 'because motivation' and 'in order to motivation', he explained that the former refers to the stock of knowledge habitualised as the sedimentation of past experience, whilst the latter pertains to a project of potential action in the future inspired and justified by past knowledge of 'because

motivation'. Moreover, the construction of motivation does not only occur in an individual dimension, but also through inter-personal relationships, in which each interactor's 'because motivation' and 'in order to motivation' can shape the formation of the other's motivation. Thus, Schutz's theory offers an insight into motivation as being constantly constructed within the vertical flow of time as well as the horizontal circles of others (Weigert, 1975). By further developing the focus on the social construction of reality, Berger and Luckmann (1967) paid attention to an ongoing dialectical process of socialisation. That is to say, individuals are not only embedded in institutionalised social structures through internalising these, but also draw on them to justify their lives and even shape broader structures through externalisation and objectification. In the process of socialisation, individuals tend to learn from others what society considers as important, valuable and real in different phases throughout their lifetime. Meanwhile, they also internalise external social structures to acquire and maintain socially acknowledged meaning systems and a subjectively coherent identity. In so doing, a person's socialised subjectivity contributes to motivating him or her to play certain roles and take certain actions to gain and maintain a sense of security, stability and continuity in their lives.

Motivation is, therefore, intersubjective and originating from habitualised and institutionalised knowledge, by which individuals make sense of their daily lives. Thus, motivation or motive is often referred to as meaning-making in sociological discussions, as a device for socialising and justifying human actions (Blum and McHugh, 1971; Mills, 1940). As mentioned previously, Weber (1978) illustrated how social actors are motivated to interact with their society through different social actions, based on certain values and expectations from the broader social context. Following Weber's emphasis on social action, Blum and McHugh (1971) indicated that motivation is a way of perceiving social actions. In their discussion, motivation is not simply an explanation or reason for actions, but also a 'social device' for integrating individuals within broad and general social rules in their everyday lives. When considering motivation as an integrative and dynamic process, they analysed how motivation contributes to developing people's identity as a social member by drawing on social rules and values. In this way, Blum and McHugh expressed a clearer and fuller picture of motivation as an interactive procedure ascribing social rules to explain

individual actions and situations as socially intelligible, being understandable through transforming random behaviour into social actions.

Motivation therefore enables individuals to interact and negotiate with society to understand and justify their everyday experience with reference to society. Thus, individuals tend to locate themselves within their social circles in order to define their membership of their communities. Blum and McHugh also identified language as one of primary means of applying motivation in social interactions, with language being considered as one of the most important social tools for justification. In his discussion of vocabularies of motive, Mills (1940) discussed how and why individuals interpret their motivation differently situated in different social situations. In so doing, he managed to bridge motivation and language by capturing the latter as a description of the former and explanation of actions. As socially shared symbols, language has the power to allow people to draw linguistically on social norms to account for their motivation and hence, justify their actions in certain situations. Moreover, by manipulating language according to different contexts, individuals are likely to better justify their actions in certain situations so as to integrate with certain social groups more effectively (Davies, 2017).

Motivation, emotions and identity

As mentioned above, motivation can enable individuals to interact with their society to maintain and recover their ongoing lives as meaningful. Depending on how the sense of meaning is maintained, enhanced, challenged, recovered or even overturned, what people do is always accompanied with certain feelings in response to those different situations. From a biocultural approach (Davies, 2011; Lyon and Barbaler, 1994; Markowitsch and Röttger-Rössler, 2007), these feelings are biological sensations that can only be experienced by the individual self; the feelings can only understood by others if they are named and described by shared social symbols. In other words, emotions are socially defined terms to capture people's feelings about different experiences in life. As such, emotions are closely associated with how people seek to make sense of their experience (Markowitsch and Röttger-Rössler, 2007). Further, these emotions are expressed and managed by individuals with reference to social norms and expectations. In other

words, emotions are socially processed feelings, being embodied with social values (Douglas, 1966). As such, people refer to certain orders and notions of emotions from their society, including behavioural norms on how to express their emotions, by committing to (or not to) certain actions. Therefore, managing emotions or 'emotional labour' (Hochschild, 1983) is likely to shape people's actions and interactions with others and their society.

As discussed above, emotions are involved in the dynamic and interactive processes of individual actions within specific social contexts. In this way, emotions can capture a presentation of how people interact with others and negotiate with society in relation to ascribing certain systems of meaning to their actions. As such, people's emotions are associated with their experience, including their motivation and actions. Further, the subjective meaning of emotion is constructed by learning and integrating values and norms shared by different social groups. Meanwhile, there are some 'core' values that are shared by important (or close) people and groups in relation to offering a 'core' sense of meaning in many different dimensions of people's lives (Davies, 2011).

The idea of the core meaning also echoes the Schutzian concept of 'life-plan' (1970; 1974), which refers to a 'supreme system' of taken-for-granted meaning (1970, p.122). In his discussion on the 'structure of life-worlds', Schutz argued how the life span encompasses and integrates people's experiences in different aspects by providing them broad reference points for meaning. Moreover, similar to the concept of core meaning, the supreme system of meaning encompasses many other sub meanings, which can provide a general direction of what people do in various aspects of their lives. By adopting Weber's instrumental-value actions, how people are motivated by these sub-meanings is likely to include pursuing a more general sense of value or meaning. In other words, people are fundamentally motivated by the core meaning, which shapes and integrates many different actions. Moreover, since emotions are associated with meaning-making by shaping people's motivation, emotions can be integrated into an ongoing process of social interaction. As such, the emotions associated with the core meaning can contribute to developing people's sense of meaning in various aspects, as well as, their sense of who they are in relation to themselves and others. Further, the sense of identity, including emotions, encompasses a range of meanings by providing a fundamental and overarching orientation to people's actions in everyday lives.

Motivation, meaninglessness and marginal situations

Given how identity can encompass everyday experience, people may often be motivated to conduct various actions in their day-to-day life in response to systems of meaning that are integrated by the sense of identity. Therefore, what people do and how they make sense of it are likely to be routinised as taken-for-granted reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). With reference to Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' (1977), people spontaneously draw on ingrained meaning, emotions and actions to deal with new situations in their ongoing lives. In other words, people may be unconsciously motivated to apply their taken-for-granted meaning to their daily interactions. Only when the sense of meaning is challenged and can no longer be applied to current and future situations, people are likely to reflect on their motivation, including what used to do, as well as why and how they did so (Giddens, 1984). In such situations, people are likely to experience difficulties in conducting certain activities; meanwhile, they may also experience a range of and, in some cases, difficult emotions, such as depression, anger, frustration and even devastation, in response to having lost the sense of meaning in their ongoing lives. As a result, they may face loss of motivation in certain circumstances. For instance, losing of a loved one, as reported, may well cause loss of energy and further undermine bereaved people's motivation to engage in various activities in their lives (Biondi and Picardi, 1996; Fry, 1998; Horowitz, Siegel et al., 1997). However, as mentioned above, emotions do not only undermine but may also enhance people's motivation. As illustrated in many bereavement studies (see examples, Bradbury, 2001; Valentine, 2007a; 2009a; 2015; Walter, 1996), and particularly in Holst-Warhaft's studies of how bereaved people have transformed anger into political action in response to the meaninglessness and unacceptability of the death of their loved one(s) (2000), bereaved people tend to deal with their loss and get on with their ongoing lives by trying to recover and reconstruct their sense of meaning. To this end, people draw on the norms and values of their society, adapting, revising and, in some cases, rejecting these in order to make sense of their experience.

Berger and Luckmann (1967) introduced the concept of 'symbolic universe' as a body of abstract and theoretical scripts that integrate and encompass social rules and systems of meaning in

society. They also argued that the symbolic universe can be used to explain and justify what they called 'marginal situations'. By giving examples of deaths of close others and the anticipation of one's own death, Berger and Luckmann argued how marginal situations can fundamentally challenge the meaning that is taken for granted in various realities of everyday life. Further, with reference to the discussion on identity above, marginal situations can raise questions and even overturn people's sense of identity, which includes core social values and subjective meanings in various dimensions. In marginal situations, according to Berger and Luckmann, society supplies its members with various understandings in the form of current overarching frameworks to enable them to recover their sense of meaning, reality and identity. Apart from the motivation to recover the sense of identity in marginal situations, what people do in dealing with the loss of meaning may also enable them to manage their feelings and emotional responses (Hochschild, 1983), and further generate a sense of hope to inspire and motivate them in ongoing lives.

Bereavement as a marginal situation

With regard to bereavement, the loss of someone close in life is likely to disrupt one's taken for granted reality, including the sense of meaning and continuing performance of daily routines (Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Parkes, 1988). Furthermore, as relational beings, bereaved people may experience the death of their loved one as disruptive or even paralysing of their sense of who they are in different aspects in lives. As a result of the accompanying loss of meaning, bereaved people may experience emotional distress and may lose motivation for their ongoing lives (Bonanno and Kaltman, 2001; Hardison, Neimeyer et al., 2005). However, in order to manage their emotions as well as carry on living, bereaved people also tend to strive to make sense of disruptive experiences and recover meaning for their ongoing lives (Durkheim, 1912; Evans, McCarthy et al., 2016; Marris, 1974; Valentine, 2017). More particularly, they tend to draw upon symbolic universes and available social discourses, to help them manage their emotional stresses and restore their daily routines. In so doing, bereaved people are motivated to reconstruct, recover and integrate their world and identity as coherent and meaningful.

Moreover, in the light of everyday life, their recovered identity may also provide them with a sense of hope, inspiration and meaning for their future lives.

Furthermore, when recovering identity in bereavement, bereaved people do not only follow norms and expectations from broader social structures, but may also adapt and reshape these norms to serve their own purposes. As mentioned above, symbolic systems of meaning from the broader society are able to provide comprehensive, but abstract meanings for marginal situations, including bereavement. However, it is not guaranteed that these symbolic interpretations can fully justify loss and bereavement and grant bereaved people a return to their own routinised lives (Neimeyer, 2011 #208). Nevertheless, as articulated in the theory of structuration by Giddens (1984), actors as a social being are capable of modifying their actions and thoughts by taking advantage of existing structures while facing problems, so that any emotional tension between the two could be diminished, as well as being able to bring about social change. That is to say, not only do social structures provide individuals with resources for taking actions, but individuals themselves can actively utilise these resources in ways that serve their own ends. Thus, bereavement can also be considered as an interactive, dynamic and emotive experience, in which motivation shapes how people use available socio-cultural discourses to manage their emotions, justify and adapt to their loss to achieve a sense of stable and coherent subjectivity.

3. Summary: motivation in bereavement as a socio-cultural construction

In this chapter, a range of interdisciplinary literature from both bereavement and motivation has been reinterpreted in order to gain a more explicit understanding of motivation in bereavement. On the one hand, as captured by bereavement studies, there is a purposive tendency in bereaved people's reactions to the loss of a loved one in different dimensions of their lives, including individual, collective and social. However, pre-existing bereavement theories and models have not considered motivation in relation to bereavement. On the other hand, mainstream motivation research has been primarily conducted in psychology in strong association with the

internal world of the individual. Therefore, whilst a psychological approach has shown how motivation can mediate individual behaviour, it does not sufficiently address the profoundly social nature of motivation, in which what people do and why and how they do it are shaped by and can also shape broader social structures. Therefore, this study has adopted a sociological is approach to illustrate how motivation is constructed, applied, challenged and recovered in relation to meaning-making. More specifically, I have identified and selectively explained theories and frameworks of meaning-making as useful for capturing the social reasons of human actions. However, these theories tend to emphasise the primary role of either society or the individual in shaping actions. Compared with meaning-making, motivation, as highlighted in this chapter, can present a more interactive, dynamic and emotive picture of actions. Based on a discussion of how motivation is constructed and applied in everyday life, I have highlighted how motivation can involve people's emotions to negotiate their sense of self. Furthermore, I have explored how people are motivated to face challenges to their sense of meaning and identity. In particular, I introduced the concept of 'marginal situations' to shed light on how people are motivated to manage their emotions, as well as regain the meaningfulness and consistency of their identity in some fundamentally disruptive situations. Finally, I highlighted bereavement as a marginal situation, in which bereaved people tend to be motivated to interact with society to reaffirm their identity in their ongoing lives.

According to the above review, motivation in bereavement can be understood as the dynamic aspect of the relationship between individuals and their society. That is to say, motivation can enable bereaved people to interact with broader social structures to manage their emotions, make sense of their experiences and reaffirm who they are in relation to others in their ongoing lives. More particularly, the loss of a loved one could significantly question and even overturn bereaved people's sense of identity, previously developed through various emotions associated with different systems of meaning and actions in their everyday lives. By facing such a 'marginal situation', bereaved people tend to interact with available socio-cultural discourses or symbolic systems, to manage their emotions and recover their sense of meaning and identity for their ongoing lives. In order to gain an insight into the dynamic, interactive and emotive process of how bereaved people deal with such a marginal situation, this study will shed flight on motivation

in bereavement by looking at how the deceased has been taken-for-granted as part of bereaved people's everyday lives before death, how that person's dying and death can shatter the bereaved person's sense of meaning and further how they are motivated to recover and reconstruct meaning following loss by negotiating available social norms. Furthermore, considering motivation in bereavement as socio-culturally constructed, I will analyse reported experiences of bereaved people from three contrasting cultures, Britain, Japan and China, in order to capture how different socio-cultural contexts can shape and be shaped by bereaved people's motivation to go on living.

Chapter 2

Background: Bereavement in different socio-cultural contexts

Motivation has been reviewed in the previous chapter as a socio-cultural construction, which is constructed and applied in various ways depending on different personal and socio-cultural circumstances. In order to capture an explicit picture of motivation, for this study a cross-cultural approach is taken to explore how it is constructed and how it shapes bereaved people's ongoing lives in distinctive cultures and sub-groups, including Britain, Japan and China in general, as well as, a particular group of bereaved parents in China. Accordingly, in this chapter, I review a variety of studies looking at bereavement in different cultures and social groups in order to draw a picture of the background of cross-cultural bereavement research in general and studies on the targeted cultures and social groups, in particular. In so doing, I aim to build up a foundation of knowledge in relation to how cultures shape and are shaped by individual bereavement, by both converging and diverging in subtle and complex ways. Furthermore, I intend to identify the gap and potential in cross-cultural bereavement studies in respect to motivation.

In this chapter, I first review bereavement in western societies where have been long traditions of researching bereavement from a multidisciplinary perspective. Subsequently, I extend the discussion to look at studies across many other cultures in order to show how grief, mourning and bereavement have been approached in different contexts. Further, I specify my focus to review how bereavement has been researched respectively in Britain, Japan and mainland China and how a comparative framework has been applied to these societies. In so doing, I highlight the lack of focus on motivation in the existing studies as well as the lack of comparative studies across all the three targeted cultures. Lastly, particular attention is paid to introducing the background of a group of parents bereaved from losing an only child under the so-called 'One Child Policy' or officially, 'Family Planning Policy' in mainland China. I point out the gap between the limited research and the growing demands of these bereaved parents in China and subsequently, highlight elderly care as a primary concern that was raised by them.

1. Bereavement in western societies

As mentioned above, many theories developed from bereavement research are based on researching bereaved people living in twentieth-century western societies. For instance, there are the early twentieth century notions of grief work (Freud, 1917) and acute grief (Lindermann, 1944), later studies on attachment (Bowlby, 1969, adjustment to changes (Marris, 1974) and stage models (Kubler-Ross, 1969; Worden, 2009) and more recently the dual process model of coping with bereavement (Stroebe and Schut, 1999). Whilst these western theories and frameworks of the bereavement experience have been universalised, they are also shaped by their cultural contexts.

The development of bereavement research in the West has reflected changing social values related to increasing individualism and medicalisation (Howarth, 2007; Walter, 1999, 2007). In normalising grief reactions as 'letting go' and classifying bereavement experiences into different phases, many bereavement researchers in the twentieth century tended to promote western discourses of normalisation and generalisation through their theories. Subsequently, post-modern research, focusing on individual diversity, agency and the dynamic responses of bereaved people, show a cultural emphasis on individual values in the western world. Meanwhile, western research has also shown a growing interest in non-western societies from a comparative perspective, by exploring how collective cultures police and instruct individual bereavement. By highlighting non-western ways of dealing with bereavement, these studies also indirectly reinforce a picture of the contemporary western world as being overly individualistic and declining in collective social structures (Long, 2003; Valentine, 2013 and 2009b).

2. Cross-cultural Bereavement

Compared with western bereavement, which has been strongly individualised and psychologised, the non-western form has primarily been the province of anthropology, with a focus on the

community and the collectiveness. Specifically, as a discipline with an initial focus on non-western and often pre-industrial societies, anthropological research has approached bereavement in different cultures by looking at how death rituals and mourning customs have been regulated and operated. Early studies, such as investigations on so called 'primitive' societies conducted by Durkheim (1912), Malinowski (2004), Gennep (1960) and so on, have illustrated how cultural elements play stronger and more intimate roles in the social transition of both deceased and bereaved people. Furthermore, Rosenblatt, Walsh et al. (1976) looked at grief and mourning in a cross-cultural perspective by putting findings from 78 world cultures together. In spite of the diversity of mourning practices and grief customs in different cultures, the study demonstrated how bereavement is a common experience following the loss of close kin and is also policed by cultural elements. With more of a focus on family grief, Rosenblatt (2013) provided a picture of how families grieve in diverse cultures, thereby showing that grief is a culturally shaped experience.

Apart from anthropological research, cross-cultural research on bereavement has also been the province of psychology, sociology and cultural studies. Whilst psychologists have mainly been concerned with loss and grief in a western context, some have also paid attention to it in non-western cultures. For example, inspired by ancestral traditions in Japan, Klass, Silverman et al. (1996) challenged the long-standing perception of grief as breaking ties with the deceased by introducing a concept of 'continuing bonds'. Further, Goss and Klass (2005) examined the development of the "continuing bonds" model to reinforce the understanding of death and mourning by looking at different cultures accross locations and over time. In sociology, Walter (2010) generated a checklist helping practitioners who work with different ethnic and cultural groups of bereaved people to have a better understanding of how grief is understood and practised in different cultures. Furthermore, Holst-Warhaft (2000) discussed how grief and rage can be used for political activities by looking at mothers of disappeared children in Argentina, gay communities in the US and families of American soldiers killed in Vietnam. In so doing, she presented a picture of how bereaved people from different socio-cultural contexts could be shaped by and reshape social structures by transforming their personal experiences into national or even international movements.

3 Bereavement in Britain, Japan and China

Following the interdisciplinary studies on bereavement across cultures, there are also those particularly focusing on Britain, Japan and China. By considering bereavement as a socio-cultural construction, how bereaved people experience and engage with loss depends on how they relate to and use the norms and values in their socio-cultural environments. In Britain, people are likely to define themselves through independence and autonomy (Valentine, 2007a; Walter, 1999). Meanwhile, Japanese culture tends to emphasise interdependency, yet individuality is gaining ground and hence, Japanese people are more likely to move between individuality and traditions (Valentine, 2009c, 2013 and 2018). Compared with these two societies, Chinese people show the strongest concern with traditions and interdependence in people's day-to-day life by prioritising others and groups over their own preference (Chow, 2006). Consequently, the three cultures are chosen to represent different types of individual-society relationships.

Britain, as a western society, has been well researched in bereavement literature (Bradbury, 1999; Marris, 1974; Parkes, 2010, 1986; Valentine, 2008) and it has also been compared with other cultures. For example, Valentine (2009a; 2013; 2018) looked at bereavement as a cultural object by comparing the UK and Japan, particularly focusing on the cultural impact on the continuing bonds with the deceased. Through analysing the narratives of bereaved people, she elicited how bereavement experiences were culturally shaped by identifying the similarities and differences between the two cultures. Whilst the narratives showed a stronger sense of individualistic values and interdependence, respectively, in Britain and Japan, the discourses of individualism and collectiveness were not necessarily mutually exclusive in bereaved people's everyday lives (Valentine, 2018). That is to say, bereaved people from both cultures tended to make sense of bereavement by interweaving between socio-cultural norms and individual needs, showing a sense of their motivation as being culturally shaped.

Japan, as a non-western country, has been often concerned with its long-standing traditions of spirituality and ancestor worship, as well as, strong connections with the deceased. As mentioned above, the development of the continuing bonds model originated from observation of Japanese

grief (Klass and Silverman, 1996). In order to explore further how the bonds are formed and maintained through ancestor veneration in Japan and self-help groups in North America, Klass (2001) examined how socio-cultural power contributes to transforming attachments with the deceased to continuing bonds in different contexts. By developing the topic of the unbroken bonds, Valentine's studies (2009a; 2010) on bereavement in contemporary Japan provide insights into how ancestral traditions and religious beliefs enrich connections and engagements between survivors and the deceased as well as how cultural factors are embedded in ongoing relationships with the deceased as part of the survivor's social life. Moreover, Valentine (2009c) also highlighted the ambivalence to dying and bereavement in Japan by indicating how cultural norms could undermine the bereavement experience and how Japanese bereaved people exercise their agency to negotiate with their culture and society to serve their own purposes in making sense of loss. Furthermore, by emphasising the interactions, Long (2004) compared the US and Japan in terms of how dying people and their families make use of different social discourses. Whilst this comparative research on dying did not directly focus on bereaved people, it still provided a sense of how people, especially families of dying people, tend to follow and challenge social structures when facing distressing situations. The above studies have illustrated how Japanese people's responses to loss are profoundly shaped by their unique socio-cultural background of a mixture of both traditional and contemporary norms.

Compared with the studies on Britain and Japan, whilst there have been plenty of investigations on bereaved people with Chinese origins in different contexts, few studies have focused their primary concern on bereavement in mainland China. Given their direct influence from the West, bereavement of Chinese Americans and people in Hong Kong have often been the subjects of research. For example, Hsu, O'Connor et al. (2009a) focused on Chinese Americans by considering how traditional Chinese beliefs regarding family hierarchy, ancestor worship and naturalism have been inherited and integrated into their perceptions of death and bereavement. Similarly, studies conducted in Hong Kong from a relational perspective, discussing how the concept of a good death and continuing bonds, have been constructed and shaped in the Chinese context (Chan et al., 2007; Mak, 2007). Compared with the studies above, those on mainland China have shown implicit concerns with the cultural impact on bereavement by focusing on either anthropological

death rituals or psychological reactions in comparison with the West. By directly focusing on the mainland, Watson and Rawski (1990) demonstrated how historical and social changes have shaped cultural responses to the death of close kin by comparing the death rituals in late imperial and modern China. On the other side, developed from a primary interest in grief as a psychological concept, Lalande and Bonanno (2006) carried out research on the relationships between continuing bonds and post-mortem adjustment of bereaved people from the US and China. This research shows that strong continuing relationships with the deceased in the initial period of grief are more likely to lead to a better adjustment for Chinese bereaved people, but a worse one for Americans. So, it turns out that culture and society do shape the experiences of bereavement. Similarly, Pressman and Bonanno (2007) drew attention to "grief processing" in three social situations of family, friends and alone between American and Chinese bereaved people by concluding familial and social involvement can benefit the psychological process of grief. As mentioned above, whilst bereavement in mainland China has been discussed and compared from a western viewpoint, there is still a lack of studies highlighting the everyday experiences of bereavement shaped in the traditional, collective, but fast-changing society.

As shown in this section, bereavement research has drawn attention to cross-cultural experiences, especially in recent sociological and psychological studies, which have explored the relationships between culture and bereavement in different contexts. On the one hand, the studies on British and Japanese bereavement have discussed the cultural impact on individuals' responses to loss and their intention within and between the two cultures in relation to the competing discourses of individualism and collectivism. On the other hand, limited studies have been conducted on bereavement in mainland China, though some have shed light on the cultural impact on grief reactions in China. Furthermore, to this researcher's knowledge, none of these studies has focused directly on or explicitly considered motivation in bereavement. Moreover, whilst some research has compared bereavement between western and eastern countries, a comparative study between the UK, China and Japan has not been undertaken thus far.

4 Exploring a marginalised group of bereaved parents in China

As a socio-cultural construction, bereavement experience is not only shaped by different cultures, but also diverse social classes and groups within society. Regarding which, in this study, attention is drawn to a particular group of bereaved parents in mainland China, who are often called 'Shidu' parents in Chinese, literally meaning loss of an only child. In today's China, it has often been used to refer to parents who lost their only child and consequently, became childless as an unforeseen consequence of the One Child Policy on the mainland. By looking at this group, I aim to provide an example of how bereavement may have a political dimension and how politics and tradition may collide to shape individuals' bereavement experiences as well as motivate their responses. Furthermore, I develop a deeper discussion on elderly care of these Shidu parents to reflect upon the discrepancy between the growing demands of these aging parents and the limited support available in society.

However, comparing with the topics of bereaved people in general in the three targeted cultures, Shidu has been a little-known topic in academia, especially among international scholars. Therefore, this section aims to build up a general picture of Shidu parents and their bereavement as part of their everyday lives. In order to do so, this section reviews studies subsequently on the sense of 'political and social origins of the Shidu phenomenon', 'growing concerns with Shidu' and 'elderly care as the greatest concern.' In so doing, I further highlight the lack of scholarly concerns with the topic of Shidu and emphasise the necessity and important of this study.

4.1 Political and social origins of the Shidu phenomenon

The One Child Policy, officially the 'Family Planning' policy, which was implemented in the late 1970s, was a nation-wide population control policy to deal with a fast growing population after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 (Han, 2015). The central government was concerned about potential conflicts between the sharply increasing population and limited resources and as a result, the one child policy was introduced to Chinese families in the late 1970s and soon became a 'Basic National Policy' in the early 1980s. According to the Population and Family Planning Law of the People's Republic of China (National People's Congress Standing Committee, 2002), this policy primarily restricted married couples across the country to bearing

one child, though the policy was implemented more strictly in urban rather than in rural areas. As addressed in the Law, there are some exclusions, such as ethnic minorities, couples with one disabled child, and if a child is still-born or dies, while the parents are still able to give birth. Couples who violate the policy receive a fine called a 'social maintenance fee', which is used to cover the extra cost of the second child to the country (Basten and Jiang, 2014), as well as other penalties, such as, being discharged from employment, if the couple works in the public sector. Therefore, many couples had to abandon or were forced to abandon their plans of having more children, leaving them at high risk of becoming childless. In October 2015, this birth control policy was officially ended due to a rapidly aging population and was further modified to a so-called 'Two-Child Policy' (National People's Congress Standing Committee, 2015). After a three-decade implementation, this policy has successfully stopped the rapid demographic expansion and has also arguably contributed to the rapid socioeconomic development of China in recent years. However, this controversial policy also left these one-child parents exposed to potential risks.

Thus, according to Mu (2004), 'One-child parents are essentially at risk'. Based on demographic data on expanding one-child households, he highlighted how these families are more likely to suffer from impaired elderly care and lack of emotional support through losing the only child as a primary resource for their old age security. He further indicated the vulnerability of these families in different aspects of their lives and emphasised governmental responsibility for providing support to them. Another study (Wang et al., 2001) presented a more detailed picture of the risks by pointing out deaths and accidents of the only child when over 14 years old can profoundly challenge their parental roles. That is, by taking an example of a medium-sized city in eastern China, the research team found that there is a greater likelihood for these parents to face childlessness, because of their low re-fertility rate. Further, the research also attempted to give suggestions on developing financial compensation and social support for parents with such issues. As indicated by researchers, the One-Child Policy may leave parents in an insecure situation due to the possibility of losing their only child.

According to the above studies, it has been estimated that deaths of the One-Child had occurred since the beginning of the implementation of the policy. However, as a new and unique social phenomenon, Shidu has only become a social issue since the 2000s. According to an investigation

from the China National Committee on Aging (2013; Aging, 2013), there were at least one million households where parents have lost their only child and the number was increasing by approximately 76,000 households annually. Despite the Chinese government announcing the termination of the policy at the end of 2015, there will still be an increasing number of Shidu parents over several decades. Thus, how to deal with the loss of the only child is not only an issue for bereaved parents, but for Chinese society as a whole.

4.2 **Growing concerns with Shidu**

In spite of the large number of Shidu families, they have remained little researched both in the public and academia until recent years. As mentioned above, Shidu only became a serious social issue after the turn of the 21st century due to two main reasons. First, such families stayed at a relatively small number in the first two decades since the policy's implementation and remained hidden from the larger population of other types of families. Second, after two decades, the first generation of one-child parents had reached an age of having lost their fertility and thus, had to face the insoluble situation of being childless for the rest of their lives. Since then, a growing number of Shidu parents have stood up to negotiate with the government for more efficient support. Moreover, Shidu as a social phenomenon was gradually picked up by the media, policy-makers and academics.

For a long time Shidu parents received little attention from the media, especially the mainstream media and hence, these families were marginalised. However, the situation started to change in recent years. In a longitudinal study on mainstream media reports on Shidu families in a metropolitan city in central China, Lei (2014) noted that whilst insights into Shidu parents' everyday lives are rarely reported, there is an increasing tendency to report about these families from a macro perspective. Also, alongside the termination of the One Child Policy in 2015, the state has shown a more positive attitude to the Shidu issue, which also led to growing attention from the mainstream media. The state-run newspaper People's Daily[3] published an article: *Do*

[3] It is the nationwide state-run newspaper, which is always representative of the political positions of the state in China.

not leave Shidu families helpless (2017). It critically pointed out the gap between current support and these families' actual needs, calling for integrated social resources with government support to improve the support system for them. Meanwhile, online media and grassroots activists also contributed to the rising focus on Shidu. Videos and photos have portrayed the difficulties of Shidu families through websites and social media, such as, a short documentary called 'Living (Huo Zhe)' (Wu, 2012), which documented a range of Shidu parents' struggles when following their bereavement lives. Some individuals, who are either Shidu parents themselves or have close contact with Shidu parents, also raised the issue that such families were a vulnerable but marginalised group in society. For instance, based on over 200 interviews with Shidu parents (Han, 2015), an official of a local Family Planning Commission reported a diverse picture of Shidu parents from different regions and background to address the importance of this issue. Looking back at how Shidu families have been portrayed via different media platforms in recent years, clearly, there has been growing interest in the Shidu by the public. However, considering the frequency of Shidu reports, this issue is far less recognised and understood[4] by the public in comparison with other vulnerable groups, such as, elderly people living alone and children in rural areas left behind by parents who must work in the city.

As the policy-maker, the state has shown ambivalent attitudes to Shidu families. From a perspective of welfare, the state has acknowledged governmental responsibilities for supporting these families through a range of national laws and regulations. The Law on Population and Family Planning, implemented in 2002, includes a brief statement of local governments' responsibilities for both one-child families with a disabled child and Shidu families. This responsibility concerns what is officially referred to as Family Planning Families with Difficulties (FPFD), including Shidu families. To follow up, the National Family Planning Commission launched a pilot scheme in 2007 to provide small amounts of financial allowance to the FPFD, whilst the Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of the Elderly (2013) has also clarified that local governments need to provide appropriate support to childless elderly people for their care. At the end of 2013, five central departments and ministries co-published a document (2013) to

[4] Shidu is still an unknown word to the majority of Chinese people.

strengthen support for the FPFD from various aspects, including medical and elderly care. However, the family support proposed by the state lacks detailed support plans and has no primary focus on Shidu families. Hence, as indicated by Lu and Lu (2014), these parents are still placed in a vulnerable position in the legal system. They further pointed out that the key is to proceed with legislation for Shidu families so that the state continues to focus on improving support for them, even if there is ambiguity in locating them in the legal system.

In addition *to* the recent studies which advocate that the state reconstructs the policies at a macro level, there has also been some research approaching Shidu families on a more micro level. That is to say, some studies have paid attention to individual dimensions of these Shidu parents with an increasing concern about their individuality and agency. Instead of seeing Shidu parents as passive receivers of governmental support, Chen (2012) and Yao (2012) emphasised these parents' subjectivity and capacity as the key for efficient support. Apart from exploring support, many researchers are also keen on categorising the issues of Shidu parents' individual lives by adopting western models and frameworks in order to assess the impact of bereavement on them. For instance, Wei (2013 & 2016) and Zheng (2015) employed western measurements of welfare, wellbeing and life quality to identify issues faced by Shidu parents in different areas of their lives. In addition, HE, Tang et al. (2014) as well as Yao and Fang (2016) generalised Shidu parents' grief reactions and needs by using western grief theories and frameworks. As such, these micro studies have provided insights into both the potential for more effective support and the challenges faced by Shidu parents; however, they tended to see them as a distressing circumstance that is separate from everyday routines and thus, paid no primary attention to their bereavement as part of their day-to-day lives.

4.3 Elderly care in everyday life

By looking at being Shidu as part of everyday life, I argue the loss of an only child cannot only challenge the current lives in various respects, for it is also likely to have a continuous impact on these parents' ongoing lives; for many of them, their aging lives. As has been highlighted above, losing someone close in life can shatter bereaved people's assumptions of their ongoing lives in

many dimensions, in which the deceased was expected to play important roles (Parkes, 1988). When considering the nature of becoming childless, many of these Shidu parents will have to face or have been in the midst of struggles brought about by their aging lives. Due to the growing demands on them along with their aging and the limited support from external sources, the elderly care has been raised as a fundamental and insoluble issue in their on-going lives in their narratives, which will be introduced in the greater detail in the chapter 7.

In China, adult children have long been considered primary caregivers to their elderly parents. Due to thousands of years of Confucian emphasis on filial piety and an undeveloped social welfare system in mainland China, adult children are both socially and since the 1950s, legally obliged to provide care for their parents, including financial assistance and physical care as well as emotional and social support (Fan, 2007). As a result, a family-centred care pattern for elderly people has been firmly established (Leung, 1997). However, without support from the child, Shidu parents have to deal with different challenges from various aspects of their everyday lives all by themselves in their old age, with little support from the state or the wider society [5]. Meanwhile, by overturning established expectations of a 'good' elderly life, the loss of an only child may be accompanied by social and self-stigmatisation. This situation may further push these parents to the margin of society, thereby profoundly threatening their economic, physical, emotional and social well-being.

As discussed in the preceding section, Shidu research has shown a changing focus from the macro risk assessment of the One Child Policy to a micro clarification of individual lives of Shidu parents, including concern about their elderly care. In earlier studies that questioned the birth control policies, Wang et al. (2001) and Mu (2004) both pointed out the potential risks of impaired elderly care when parents are confronted with child loss. Following a concern with Shidu parents' agency, Chen (2012) and Yao and Fang (2012) have illustrated the potential for improving Shidu parents' agency for dealing with their elderly care, though there have been no explicit discussions on this.

[5] There are a few charities based in developed cities offering various types of support to elderly people. Meanwhile, local community organisations provide mainly physical and material assistance to elderly people who are living with life difficulties, yet the resources are very limited and mainly based in urban areas.

When further looking into the details of these parents' lives, Wei et al. (2013 & 2016) indicated that Shidu parents are particularly vulnerable in five dimensions, one of which is old age security. In another study, Zheng (2015) also mentioned the importance of further research on social support to compensate for the lack of the one child as a primary source of elderly caregiving. As has been explained in this section, being Shidu is very likely to threaten the quality of the parents' elderly lives, though their care has been little researched as a primary concern. Hence, a more explicit investigation of Shidu parents' elderly lives is called for in relation to how they make sense of an old age without support from their child and how they tend to seek support to carry on their lives. By highlighting elderly care as Shidu parents' greatest concern, I will further illustrate how they are motivated to negotiate the state and the society for a better aging life.

5. Summary: Further research on bereavement across and within cultures

It has shown the potential of using motivation as a key notion to capture the dynamics and diversity of bereavement experience in different social backgrounds, whilst a review of the extant literature has revealed some limitations, which are summarised in four points next. First, there is no existing research primarily focusing on bereavement and motivation as a joint topic in any culture. Second, cultural research on bereavement so far, whilst having investigated different cultures, it has paid little attention to bereaved people in mainland China. Third, from a comparative perspective, no research has been conducted that considers China the UK and Japan concurrently. Fourth, as a particular group of bereaved people, Shidu parents have been little researched, both within and outside China, even though they could provide a good example for comparing within China as well as with other cultures, to explore how bereaved people are motivated to negotiate with broader structures to deal with their bereavement in different socio-cultural and even political contexts. In response to these limitations, I ground my research in qualitative narratives from a group of bereaved people from Britain, Japan and China, in general and from a group of Shidu parents, in particular. In so doing, I explore how motivation, as a socio-cultural construction, shapes and is shaped in different social contexts.

Chapter 3

Methodology: Identifying motivation in bereavement from everyday life

1. Introduction

A rigorous qualitative methodology is required for researchers when attempting to access the lived experiences of individuals who are experiencing distressing and even traumatic life events, such as bereavement. Hence, I adopt a sensitive, sympathetic and flexible approach in this study. By focusing on three socio-culturally distinctive societies, most notably regarding in China where the primary data were collected, I explain approaches that have been developed to collect bereavement narratives and to interpret bereaved people's motivation involved in their everyday lives.

By taking a sociological viewpoint, the aim is to explore bereaved people's motivation and experiences as socio-cultural constructions from their reported everyday experiences. In particular, this study involves drawing on the sociological concept of motivation to explore the extent to which and how it functions as a social device in bereaved people's narratives to enable them to construct meaning and recover their everyday lives. Moreover, by focusing on language as involving commonly shared symbols through which people construct their worlds (Mills, 1940; Scott and Lyman, 1968; Valentine, 2007a), for this study, a qualitative approach is adopted to investigate and compare individual narratives both within and across cultures to capture how people experience bereavement in their day to day lives in relation to what they did and thought, as well as, why and how they did and felt so.

Specifically, in order to study the socio-culturally constructed motivation in bereavement, I focus on the bereavement narratives of individuals from the three countries of Britain, Japan and China. Despite bereavement being a universal experience across time and societies (Stroebe, 1987), it has been found to be profoundly shaped by socio-cultural circumstances (Holst-Warhaft, 2000;

Valentine, 2007a; 2007b; Valentine, 2009b; Walter, 1999; 2008). Therefore, a cross-cultural perspective could further contribute to representing commonalities and variation in the interactive relationships between individuals and society while facing bereavement. In keeping with the current Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) data policy, which encourages the reuse of data, existing data-sets from Britain and Japan have been utilised in the study, while primary data from mainland China have been collected as there is no suitable pre-existing data. The primary data is based on a qualitative investigation in mainland China and has been collected through multiple platforms due to bereavement being a taboo subject and accessing data being restricted, as further explained later in this chapter.

In the following, the research aims and objectives are discussed as well as how these have guided accessing, collecting and interpreting the data. Attention is first paid to the ontological and epistemological positions adopted for this research, which show the researcher's methodological understandings of how to consider the world, how to view this research in the world, and moreover, how the knowledge is constructed. Secondly, the research objectives are clarified, which have guided the data collection and analysis. Thirdly, attention to is paid to the primary data collection in China, which has been undertaken in very restricted circumstances. Fourthly, I reflect on the experience of collecting primary data and reusing secondary data. Fifthly, data analysis methods are discussed in relation to identifying motivation in bereavement from the lived experiences of bereaved people. Lastly, I evaluate this study in order to highlight its significance.

2. Defining a standpoint for the research

As mentioned above, in order to study motivation and experiences of bereaved people in different contexts, for this research, a qualitative research strategy is adopted, which includes participant observation and obtaining interview narratives to 'explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences and imaginings of our research participants, the ways that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings that they

generate' (Mason, 2002, p.1). Given the aim of this study is the generalisation of empirical evidence from interviews with bereaved individuals, for the investigation itself, a particular stance has been taken on what counts as knowledge (ontology), how that knowledge can be obtained (epistemology) and how to engage in the research process (Willig, 2013). That is, this section is concerned with explaining the ontological and epistemological positions adopted for the research and the role of the researcher in the examination of motivation in bereavement.

Ontologically, a social constructionist perspective is assumed to explore motivation in bereavement. This involves foregrounding the social world as relational, that is, shaped by the relationship between individuals and their social and cultural contexts. The focus of study is, therefore, on how individuals are motivated to negotiate available social and cultural norms in light of their own personal circumstances. In particular, in focusing on bereaved people as a vulnerable group, this perspective allows for capturing how cultural norms are not determinative, but rather, open to interpretation by individuals, who may actively contribute to shaping culture (Long, 2004; Seale, 1998; Valentine, 2009a). As such, by taking individual bereavement as socially constructed, this perspective enables me to capture the diversity and commonality of bereavement in relation to how motivation can shape and be shaped by individual experiences in different socio-cultural contexts (Neimeyer, Klass et al., 2014; Valentine, 2007a). Furthermore, by relying on language as a system of commonly shared symbols constructed in particular societies (Mills, 1940), I examine reported accounts of bereavement experiences as a means of accessing socio-cultural norms in different contexts and explore how they can be respectively negotiated by bereaved people to serve their motivation in their ongoing lives.

Accordingly, to capture motivation in bereavement as a cultural object requires an interpretivist epistemological position, that is, an approach that studies how individuals talk about, interpret and make sense of their subjective experience. This approach is particularly appropriate in relation to bereavement as an experience in which our taken-for-granted way of being breaks down. That is, grief tends to propel us into attempting to understand and make sense of a situation that we have not chosen as well as reminding us of our mortality and vulnerability (Attig, 2011). Furthermore, the interpretivist approach is particularly appropriate for studying motivation in bereavement, which was reported and explained by the bereaved people in their

accounts. In so doing, it enables this researcher to obtain information on how bereaved individuals are motivated to confront and deal with bereavement.

As discussed above, how individuals negotiate normative scripts to make sense of their experience can best be captured through accessing their subjective experiences (Creswell, 2014). Such scripts, through which people understand and communicate their experiences, are transmitted not only through language, but also through traditions, music, art and so on. However, language as commonly shared symbols can enable individuals to convey their bereavement, including both their actions and thoughts (Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Valentine, 2007a; Walter, 1999) as well as their motivation (Mills, 1940). Accordingly, language provides a means of accessing available cultural discourses and how people negotiate these. Consequently, interviewing bereaved individuals about their experiences can provide valuable data that can show how motivation is constructed and how it can shape and be shaped by interactions between bereaved individuals and available discourses in their society and culture. Further, the data also contribute to the sociological literature in a more general sense by illustrating how individuals can interact with society through their socially constructed motivation.

In addition, the sensitivity and complexity of bereavement call for cooperative, participative and sometimes creative approaches to collecting the research data. Hence, this research primarily involves using interviewing and other alternative methods as tools to collect first-hand Chinese data, during which, as discussed more fully in the section 4 of this chapter, I interacted with participants to co-construct open-ended narratives of their bereavement. Meanwhile, due to the sensitive nature of bereavement in China, other methods have also been employed to approach bereaved people from different platforms. Furthermore, both new data and that pre-existing form have been analysed to gain insight into bereaved people's motivation through reported everyday experiences in different contexts.

3. Research aims and objectives

By examining the lived experiences of bereaved people as reported in interview narratives, the of aim of this study is to explore how motivation can shape bereaved people's bereavement as part of their ongoing lives. Considering the power of storytelling which enables to access bereaved people's vivid life experiences (Riessman, 2008), I aim to explore motivation in bereavement from four perspectives. First, I interpret the narratives of bereaved people's unique and dynamic experience in order to shed light on various thoughts and actions that they committed in their personal and social circumstances. Second, by looking at how 'culture speaks through the individual' (Geertz, 1983), I set to examine these bereavement experiences as a socio-cultural construction that is profoundly shaped by an individual's socio-cultural background. Third, by focusing on motivation, the intention is to explore how these bereaved people's taken-for-granted meanings were constructed before their loss, how dying and death could challenge these meanings and how the bereaved people were motivated to recover and reshape these meanings in their ongoing lives. Fourth, through representing an interactive picture of bereavement, I aim to illustrate how these bereaved people from different socio-cultural background were motivated not only to follow social norms, but also to adapt, revise, improvise and even reshape the status quo. In order to do so, I adopt as a narrative approach to understand the bereaved people's motivation and everyday experiences in their adaption to loss by interpreting their interactions and negotiations with the broader socio-cultural structures.

4. Accessing reported experiences of bereaved people

This research provides a new picture of motivation in bereavement, thus deepening understanding of bereavement as a socio-cultural construction. The analysis is primarily based on analysing and further comparing bereavement narratives from the three different countries of the UK, Japan and China, as well as, the specific group of Shidu parents in China. Due to the time constraints of a doctoral study as well as the availability of pre-existing data, this research involves processing qualitative data from both primary and secondary sources. In this section, I introduce how these data have been collected and studied to access bereaved people's everyday

experiences from each culture, including a detailed discussion of how the primary data were collected in China from both bereaved people, in general and Shidu parents, in particular.

4.1 Reusing secondary data

Pre-existing interviews have been drawn upon for the study to access bereavement experiences from the UK and Japan. The secondary data from both countries derive from qualitative interviews collected in Bath, England, from 2003 - 2006 (see Appendix, table 1) and Tokyo, Japan, in 2007 – 2008 (see Appendix, table 2). These interviews were conducted for researching bereavement in in Britain (Valentine, 2007a) and Japan (Valentine, 2009a; 2009c; 2010). In the interviews, semi-structured interviewing with open-ended questions was used to gain an insight of bereavement from reported experience of the bereaved people from two countries. Since the focus of the present study is on motivation in bereavement, these secondary interviews may be questioned as having been collected for other research purposes and interests. However, as clarified above, motivation in this study does not refer to concrete reasons for actions, but rather, to a social device that facilitates social interactions in relation to what people do as well as why and how they do. Therefore, these secondary narratives can present an explicit picture of what the bereaved people did in their everyday lives. Further, given the explanatory power of language, the bereaved people drew on to explain and justified what they did. Thus, these narratives can also offer an insight of why and how the bereaved people did certain things. In addition, from a cross-cultural perspective, the secondary narratives have been used and interpreted to identify commonalities and variations between the two cultures, by looking at how the individuals made sense of loss and lived with the deceased in their ongoing lives (Valentine, 2009b; 2013; 2018). In using them, these secondary data can provide relevant narrative materials to compare with primary narrative data collected from a range of Chinese bereaved people on the mainland.

4.2 Collecting primary data

Compared with the UK and Japan, as mentioned in the previous chapter, qualitative data on bereavement in China have been little gathered. In Chinese society, death is even more of a taboo topic than in western ones (Ariès, 1982). In particular, Chinese culture, has been profoundly influenced by the Confucian emphasis on the essentials of daily life and the importance of biological lineage (Hsu, O'Connor et al., 2009). As a consequence, death and any death-related topics are considered inappropriate and would even be forbidden at certain special occasions, such as the Chinese New Year, weddings and anything congratulatory. Hence, death is rarely discussed as the main topic either in public or in ordinary conversation (Chow, 2006). Similar to the topic of death, bereavement is also defined as a sensitive topic that people tend to avoid. Thus, bereaved people are not likely to talk about their loss in front of others, especially, people who are not close to them. Rather, grief in China is often considered a private matter involving personal emotions and family affairs. In addition, due to strong cultural emphasis on the negativity and even fears around death, bereaved people may also avoid talking about their loss in order not to discomfort others. On the other hand, many non-bereaved people also feel uncomfortable talking about someone else's loss. Apart from the negativities related to death, many are confused about how to react to bereaved people 'appropriately' and have concerns about the sensitive nature of loss for survivors.

As explained above, bereavement is a taboo topic among many Chinese, whether or not they are bereaved. Hence, it is challenging to gain access to the details of the sensitive and in some cases traumatic experience that Chinese bereaved people would normally keep private. In view of these cultural circumstances, researching bereavement in China needs a methodology that is flexible and creative. This section focuses on how I adapted a qualitative methodology in order to gain access to the stories of bereaved people in contemporary China. More specifically, I first introduce how I applied a 'narrative approach' to structure interviews and how I identified the samples in; further, I go into detail to discuss how I select samples and how I collected the different types of data from different sources through 'conducting face-to-face interviews', 'using electronic media' and 'using TV interviews'.

A narrative approach

Qualitative interviewing was chosen to access rich and detailed narrative data on bereaved people's experiences and to obtain a diverse and dynamic picture of bereavement. This included the various interactions between these people and their socio-cultural environments along with the impact of bereavement on different aspects of their lives (Bonanno, 2004; Bonanno, Wortman et al., 2002; Parkes, 1988; Stroebe and Schut, 1999; Valentine, 2009a; Walter, 1996). Put another way, bereavement narratives were selected as the tool to access sensitive experiences relating to bereavement in order to understand how society shapes and is shaped by Chinese bereaved people in relation to their motivation.

In light of the secondary interviews carried out with the other two cultures, an interviewing method was considered as a feasible way to give bereaved people from China a chance to articulate their subjectivity in relation to what they have experienced and how they have been motivated. Specifically, these bereaved individuals were engaged in semi-structured interview with open-ended questions throughout the whole conversation to draw a fuller picture of their everyday lives. Furthermore, an inductive approach also allowed me to identify motivation and bereavement in an everyday sense from the interviewees' own point of view. In order to encourage in-depth narratives of distressing memories from these people, I adopted an informal and conversational approach, in which I encouraged them to tell their own story. In so doing, I tried to avoid disrupting the person's thoughts, as well as, to encourage them to feel less comfortable to talk to me about their very private and emotional experiences of loss. Regarding my role, I took a reflexive stance so as to be clear about my own pre-understandings during the interview process and thus, not to let these intrude on the conversations (Valentine, 2007a).

Whilst face-to-face interviewing was adopted as the primary approach to learn about bereaved people's experiences, alongside this form of data collection in China, I discovered other methods to gather such reported experiences. In other words, I decided that so long as the dynamics of bereavement could be properly captured, the research methods did not need to be restricted to face-to-face interviewing. To this end, I engaged in several alternative methods, including conducting on-line and message interviews, choosing online posts of written narratives as well

as three TV interviews. Later in this chapter, I specifically introduce these data collection approaches, thus demonstrating the flexibility and creativity of the methodological exploration.

Data samples

As previously explained, this study involves taking motivation in bereavement as a social construction and reflecting on how socio-cultural norms and values shape and are shaped by individual experiences of bereavement (Valentine, 2006; 2007a; 2013). Therefore, the data were collected to reflect an explicit picture of how different socio-cultural contexts could shape and/or even be shaped by bereaved people's experiences in relation to motivating them to negotiate available social norms to seek meaning for their ongoing lives. In order to attain a sample of Chinese bereaved, I approached a range of people who had lost their children, spouses, parents, siblings or grandparents and whose ages spanned the 20s through to the 90s (Table 1). In spite of the diversity of the sample, it contains a limited number of bereaved people from rural areas, for due to the sensitivity of the research theme, it was extremely difficult to identify and access this cohort. As will be explained later, third parties, such as social workers and council staff, as well as the internet, proved particularly helpful in enabling me to access bereaved interviewees. However, in comparison with bereaved people living in cities, those from rural areas have less access to support and resources, which hindered their being identified. In addition, since there is a huge urban-rural gap regarding various aspects of everyday life, it can be assumed that bereaved people from each of these backgrounds have considerably different ways of dealing with their bereavement. For these reasons, I did not primarily target at rural bereaved people, whilst there is 1 out of 31 interviews conducted with a man who came from the countryside but has spent a lot of time in cities. By considering the limitation of the data, a further study on rural bereaved people could be conducted in the future.

Conducting face to face interviews

As discussed above, qualitative interviewing enables the interviewer to obtain in-depth and detailed narrative data about interviewees' experiences. Thus, the interviews I conducted in this

study were semi-structured with open-ended questions to encourage interviewees to talk about their experiences from their own perspectives. Furthermore, I adopted an informal, conversational approach that allowed interviewees to take the lead in recounting to me how they had lived with the deceased, how loss had impacted on their ongoing lives and how they had responded to their loss. Where appropriate, I also included improvised questions that had not been documented in previous research, but emerged during the conversation. In so doing, I aimed to capture a fuller picture of their bereavement experiences. Furthermore, in order to record the conversations, I used a voice recorder to keep an account of these interviews with the consents of the interviewees.

Considering the sensitive nature of this study, I assumed that it might be difficult for interviewees to open up on such a topic to a stranger who had no solid trusting relationship with them. As a result, the progress of data collection could have obstructed. In response to this concern, I had borne in mind that I needed to familiarise myself with potential interviewees before asking them to share about their loss with me. Moreover, as found in the actual data collection, a trusting relationship was not only necessary between the interviewees and me, but sometimes was also required with some third parties who acted as gatekeepers providing access to certain groups of bereaved people.

In order to build trusting relationship with the different parties involved in the data collection, I had to ground myself in everyday environments, where they lived or worked so as to develop interactions with them. China is a society that tends to draw strict boundaries between insiders and outsiders, so it was important to act as one of the former when dealing with Chinese people face to face. To this end, I initiated my study by volunteering in both a social work organisation and several local communities in Hefei, the capital city of the eastern Anhui Province in China. Hefei has been experiencing fast socioeconomic development but still preserves many traditions. Hence, I started to work with social workers and local community staff on a frequent basis. In so doing, I was able to introduce my research, which is often considered as ‘strange’ and taboo in China, to my ‘colleagues’ and to gain an insight into how they understood bereavement and bereaved people. By making these commitments, my colleagues showed their understanding and support for my research. Meanwhile, the briefing of bereavement enabled them to identify

targets in their work circles and their growing trust in me also helped them to feel more comfortable with introducing me to the potential interviewees. In addition, I conducted interviews with bereaved people from a self-help group as well as my own personal networks. In accessing the self-help group, I obtained support from a governmental official as the gatekeeper, who has professional knowledge of academic research and is dedicated to support bereaved parents. As such, he introduced me to the group and helped me build trusting relationships with the members in a short period. Regarding my personal networks, the process was a much more straightforward one of approaching potential interviewees either by myself or through family and friends who know me well. In the following, I provide details of how the face-to-face interview data were collected in the different circumstances in the order of the 'social work centre', 'local community committees', the 'self-help group' and 'personal networks'.

Social work centre

Social workers in China, who provide professional care to vulnerable people and are employed through government finance, tend to know their clients well from frequent daily interactions with them. The centre I volunteered at in Hefei, Anhui province, had a wide support system for a range of registered clients from children to elderly people in the residential area. I particularly volunteered in a division for supporting Shidu parents, which provided the greatest likelihood of accessing bereaved people in the centre. By working with social workers in the division on a daily basis, I built trust with the social workers. As a consequence, they painstakingly endeavoured to select those clients who they believed would be willing to be interviewed and would not feel too upset by talking about their experience. With the support from the social workers, I conducted two face-to-face interviews with bereaved people, including one widow and one couple of Shidu parents (Appendix, Table 3). Both interviewees chose to have their social workers present so that they could feel more relaxed and comfortable during the interviews. Meanwhile, the social workers also preferred to stay in order to reassure their clients that they would not be traumatised for the second time. Whilst the social workers remained silent for most of the time, sometimes their comments helped me understand more about interviewees' living conditions.

For example, one provided some updates about the end of life care for bereaved parents during the interview to provide a wider sense of the available support.

Local community committees

Being different from social workers, local community staff in Hefei were more concerned with administrative work related to people's day-to-day life in their communities. Because of the nature of their work, these staff have a good understanding of the situations of all the people residing in the area and hence, they could identify potential interviewees effectively. Interestingly, since elderly people in China tend to engage more with local communities, all six bereaved people I interviewed were retired, aged from 60 to 90 plus, except for one man who was in his late 50s and still working full time (see Appendix, Table 3). Two out the six interviews were with Shidu parents.

Since community staff do not work as intimately with potential interviewees as social workers do, these staff adopted a more direct approach to bereaved people. After having a good understanding of my research, they contacted various bereaved people in their communities by introducing me as a volunteer. After gaining consent, I went along with staff to visit these bereaved people in their homes. In so doing, they were more likely to trust and open up to me, in that I was introduced by community workers, who were representatives of the government. Hence, they tended to categorise me as part of their community and perhaps more importantly, an 'insider'.

In view of the sensitivity of the topic, I was very cautious about how to invite them to share their bereavement experiences with me. In order to reassure them, I began by making these four points: 1) I am looking at the everyday life of elderly people in China; 2) I understand that the loss of someone loved is a hard experience; 3) I am particularly interested in their life after the loss and how their bereavement has influenced their lives; and 4) I invite them to share their experiences, especially their bereavement with me. It turned out these bereaved elderly people were happy to share their life experiences with me, though sometimes they tended to talk about their life in general. Nonetheless, these narratives still provided a sense of how they rebuilt their

life after loss. Also, when they strayed from the topic of interest I would politely encourage them back on track to their experiences of bereavement.

Throughout the whole period in the two local communities, most of the interviews were conducted in the absence of the community staff. This is because a trusting relationship had been developed; meanwhile, these staff had to spend more time on administrative jobs rather than accompanying the bereaved people in the interviews. Only one interview with a bereaved mother was held with a community staff member, as it involved the One Child Policy. It can be assumed that this politically sensitive topic was a concern for staff, especially in front of a researcher based abroad.

Self-help group

Few bereavement self-help groups exist in mainland China due to many social and political restrictions, but there still are some groups of bereaved people, especially those of Shidu parents, which are very active in relation to self-support and negotiation with society. As an unforeseen consequence of the nationwide One Child Policy, as explained earlier many parents are bereaved from losing the only child in their families. Furthermore, due to various social, cultural and political circumstances, these parents are often marginalised by the society, receiving little support from it. Hence, self-help groups have been established in some cities for these bereaved parents, who are called 'families' or 'people with the same fate' by themselves in the groups. During the data collection, I made a lot of effort to approach these bereaved parents and in particular, succeeded in getting involved in one group. Child loss, as one of the most unexpected and unacceptable deaths, always challenges socio-cultural expectations of parenthood as well as often leaves them in extremely vulnerable positions in society (Riches, 2000 #6;Rosenblatt, 2000 #7). By focusing on these Shidu parents, I aim to document a clearer picture of motivation in bereavement in relation to how these parents were motivated to actively negotiate society and the government for a better life for themselves as well as for other Shidu parents.

Since these parents are often marginalised from the public, I contacted a governmental official from Hunan, a southwest province in China. Whilst this official had been involved with the

implementation of the One Child Policy, he tended to refer himself as a 'deliveryman' who reflected the difficulties and issues of these Shidu parents to the wider public. After exchanging opinions on the Shidu issue academically and practically, he introduced me to the self-help group for bereaved parents, which is based in his city and also, the only one officially registered on mainland China at the time. Group members warmly welcomed my visit when I explained that the motivation of approaching them was to raise their issues in academia and further to provide suggestions for policy-making to reshape current support structures in a local and ideally a national level. As mentioned above, the unsupportive socio-cultural environment had largely obstructed them to share their experiences, especially various issues in their lives, with other people. Therefore, they positively participated the interviews as a means of expressing their emotions as well as raise their voices to the wider society. Accordingly, all the interviews quickly alighted on the topic, as the participants were willing to talk about their loss and life. During my stay in the city in Hunan, I conducted three individual interviews and one group interview with in total 8 people, including 1 couple and 6 individuals (Table 3).

Personal networks

In my social circles, there were several people who had lost their loved one(s). The reason why I chose someone I knew to approach, was because a solid trusting relationship had been built between us. As they were cognisant, to a varying extent, about my research and knew me well in person, I deemed that they were more likely to provide me with a deeper insight regarding their bereavement experiences. I conducted interviews with four people, including one close relative, one good friend and two relatives from my extended family. I contacted the close relative, who is my uncle in law, and the close friend directly as I have been keeping close contact with them already. For the two relatives from the extended family, I approached them with help of their family members as my gatekeepers. It turns out that my personal relationships with them enabled me to access their details of their most distressing experiences and therefore to obtain better understandings of their experiences and motivation in bereavement.

Using electronic media

Whilst face-to-face interviewing was more likely to locate me in the interactive conversations as a co-constructor for drawing out the lived experiences of bereaved people, this sometimes was restricted by circumstances, such as physical distance, finance and individual preferences. Hence, I also adopted an approach to obtaining bereavement experiences that did not rely on face-to-face contact, but rather, on visual platforms, including the internet and TV.

Online video interviews

Online interviews via video chat can allow both participants to have more visualised communication at physical distance. Due to the administrative system in China, different provinces and regions often have different welfare and support frameworks for vulnerable people, such as those for marginalised Shidu parents. Therefore, in order to obtain a wider picture of Shidu parents beyond Anhui and Hunan provinces, I posted a slide show, which is summarised from my presentations at some academic conferences on a nationwide website for Shidu parents to recruit interviewees. In so doing, I was intended to convince them to accept me as a young Chinese man interested in the "inside' of their life, rather than an investigator standing "outside". It turns out that many parents reacted to my post very positively by expressing their gratitude for my efforts and writing their opinions. Moreover, when I left my contact details in a post, I was contacted by three parents. Two of them, who were a bereaved father from Heilongjiang Province and a mother from Hubei Province, became my interviewees later through video chats, for which I used one of the most used chat apps in mainland China, called QQ to conduct and record the interviews with the interviewees' permission. The third parent hesitated to be interviewed through a video chat and chose to do so by a text message interview, which will be introduced in the next section.

Before the point of the interview, frequent conversations were made to build a sense of trust between us. As the bereaved father said: 'although I have been tricked by bad people many times on the internet, I chose to trust you as I have seen your honesty and kindness in our conversation'. In the actual video interviews, the two parents opened up to me about their bereavement

experiences in relation to my identity as a researcher, who they believe might be able to pass their issues to the wider audience. Both interviews went smoothly and lasted for over one hour. In sum, despite these interviews not being physically face-to-face, modern technology provided a new platform for building the trust with people at a distance and further accessing their narratives about their everyday experiences in bereavement.

Text interviews

Despite the video interview being demonstrated as a workable method, two bereaved people who I approached were somewhat reticent about communicating with me through a video chat (Table 3). Both of these two interviewees contacted to me, one a bereaved mother from the website for Shidu parents, another a bereaved sister from a chat group for bereaved siblings, where I also proposed my research. When they indicated their discomfort to my invitation to participate in a verbal interview, I did not push them and instead, I provided them with the substitute of a message interview, which was accepted by them. In comparison with video interviews, these message interviews were more like a long-term conversation, which allowed both sides to have sufficient time to construct our language effectively; whereas, the plain texts sometimes did restrict interaction between me and the interviewees. By conducting the two text interviews, in spite of the lack of interactions, I was able to access detailed life experiences of two Shidu parents. Furthermore, this form of interviewing also proved a practicable novel method that could be used in future works.

Written narratives (online posts)

As explained above, the interviewing was the main approach to collecting bereavement narratives for this research, as has been the case in many other qualitative studies (Chow, Chan et al., 2007; Mak, 2007; Marris, 1974; Riches, 2000; Valentine, 2007a; 2009c). However, due to the sensitivity of the topic in Chinese society, interviewing was not the only method adopted in the data collection; rather, some creative methods were adopted to capture a fuller picture of bereavement in China. As discovered during the data collection, young bereaved people in China

were more difficult to access than other age groups. That is because they tended to spend less time to develop a trusting relationship with me. Furthermore, some of those I approached preferred not to revisit their distressing memory of loss and were more concerned with their current or future life. For example, a pregnant woman showed her priority of expecting the future with her baby rather than recollecting the sad memories of losing her grandfather. As a result, only two out of 26 verbal interviews were conducted with young bereaved.

The secondary interviews were collected from bereaved people in different age groups; as such, I aimed to have a more diverse sample of Chinese bereaved people in order to make the Chinese data comparable with the British and Japanese data, which were collected from different ages groups. I first explored an online chat group consisting of a range of young bereaved people who had lost their sibling (s). Whilst I was able to interview a bereaved sister by text messages from a chat group dedicated to bereaved siblings, other young people in the group were not very responsive to me, a stranger in the group. However, accidentally, I found some essays written by young bereaved people by visiting a website (www.zhihu.com), which is a platform for people to share their feelings. From these, I carefully chose five written narratives for inclusion into the dataset (Table 3). Being different from interactive interviews, these narratives leave just the writer as the only constructor of his/her life-story without contributions from others. However, despite this the sophisticated language of these essays provides vivid description of these young people's bereavement experiences, including social interaction from different aspects of their lives. In addition, these narratives strongly reflect the culture influences in their individual experiences; therefore, I believed that these accounts, alongside other Chinese interviews, could contribute to the broader picture of bereavement as a socio-cultural construction.

Using TV interviews

As mentioned in chapter 2, qualitative research on bereavement in mainland China has rarely been conducted by researchers from both inside and outside of the country. Hence, my fieldwork is not only a study of exploring the motivation of bereaved people in China, but also a preliminary investigation of probing various possibilities for an appropriate methodology in the Chinese

context. That is, I sought any possible methods to access bereaved people's narratives during the data collection period. During my stay in China, I came across three TV interviews, which were conducted with two Shidu mothers and a bereaved man. The interviews with the two mothers had clearly focus on their experiences of losing an only child in their everyday lives. For the third interview, although the man was largely concerned with his life story of looking for his missing son, he also conveyed how his traumatic experience of losing three family members in the past 10 years had influenced his life and how the motivation of seeking the lost son had supported him in rebuilding his broken life. That is to say, the third TV interview also drew out a clear picture of this man's loss as well as his journey to reconstruct his everyday life.

4.3 Reflections on the data collection in China

The overall process of collecting the primary data in China was challenging, but fruitful, in relation to developing a cooperative approach to engaging with interviewees and gatekeepers as well as identifying creative methods to access the narratives. In order to access one of the most private and often distressing experiences in a culturally sensitive and sometimes even taboo environment, I had to pay particular attention to every step in the process, including where to access bereavement narratives, how to select them and especially how to engage with people. As shown above, modern technology enabled me to access reported experiences of bereaved people around China at a distance and sometimes even without committing to actual interviews undertaken by myself, such as the written narratives and the TV interviews referred to above. In the process of collecting data from different sources, I had to face various challenges in relation not only how to conduct primary interviews but also how to identify secondary narratives. In this section, I discuss my reflections on the experiences of interviewing people by focusing on 'ethical issues', 'interview techniques', 'secondary narratives', and 'emotional impact'.

Ethical issues

Due to the private and sensitive nature of bereavement, before conducting actual interviews, I was faced with how to address and protect the interviewees' rights and privacy from an ethical perspective. In qualitative studies, consent forms are very often employed to deal with such ethical concerns (Valentine, 2007b) and hence, I too sought informed consent from all of my interviewees. However, being different to other countries, verbal rather than written consent was gained in this study. This is because, the consent form was not a well-known concept for most of my interviewees, many of whom had limited experience of formal education. Furthermore, from my own personal experience, many Chinese people are cautious about signing their name due to the growing incidents of fraud in China, whereby people's signature is abused. This situation became apparent later during the actual interviews, when many participants hesitated to sign their name on a consent form. Hence, in order not to alienate the participants from me, I decided to ask for verbal consent instead. As discovered by Chen, Hong et al. (2015), in qualitative interviews with Chinese dying people and their family members, many of his participants preferred a verbal agreement based on a trusting relationship, instead of a formal consent form. As such, it can be assumed that interpersonal relationships in China are still more dependent on kinship, friendships and trusting relations rather than legal paperwork. Accordingly, I asked for verbal consent from face-to-face participants at the beginning of the interview and recorded text consent for message interviews. In each session, I started from explaining how the interviewee's rights, including the confidentiality will be protected during and after the interview. In so doing, I aim to reassure them at the beginning of the interviews in relation to creating a more comfortable and trusting atmosphere.

Interview techniques

All the first-hand first interviews were co-constructed by the interviewees, myself and sometimes with gatekeepers; therefore, I paid special attention to the communication techniques in order to identify sympathetic, grateful and to be respectful approaches to some of the bereaved people's most private and emotional experiences. From an academic perspective, these interviews allowed me to co-construct the socio-culturally shaped experiences with these

bereaved people to elicit how motivation had shaped their ongoing lives. Accordingly, exploring the interactions between bereaved people and society was prioritised throughout the whole period in all the interviews. To date, interview techniques have been introduced and developed in much existing qualitative literature (Cooper, 1999), especially in studies focusing on sensitive topics (Valentine, 2007b). In this section, I introduce some useful techniques in relation to how to interview these Chinese people about the taboo topic of bereavement.

Some of the interviewees showed nervousness, to some extent, at the beginning of interviews. In order to relax them and create a less stressful atmosphere, I always tried to start with an informal chat and then, moved on to familiarising them with the purpose of the interview. More specifically, I explained that my research is to explore how Chinese people deal with their bereavement. In addition, I explained to them that the interview would not be a question-and-answer interview, but rather, an informal conversation about their loved one and their life, from which I would try to identify what I was particularly seeking. Therefore, I invited them to take the lead to tell me whatever they felt comfortable in talking about. During the interviews, I predominantly played the role of a listener, thus allowing them to be the story-tellers in their interactive conversation with me. Furthermore, in order not to distress the interviewees at the end of the interviews, I managed to start with questions relating to more painful experiences, such as the death itself and the negative impact of loss, from the beginning of the interviews. In so doing, the whole interview was more likely to end with the interviewees' positive experiences, such as enjoying current life or keeping hope for the future.

A semi-structured interviewing style with open-ended questions enabled these bereaved people to talk about and reflect on those aspects of their bereavement experience from their own perspectives. Whilst their narratives tended to focus mainly on the person who had died and on their own grief, some people also 'strayed away' from the main topic by talking about something irrelevant to their bereavement. I was concerned during the first few interviews, as I assumed that these tangential narratives would lower the data quality. Nonetheless, I did not interrupt them from talking about 'irrelevant' experiences in order not to upset them. However, I realised later that their narratives, including those 'irrelevant' ones, were all valuable in relation to presenting different aspects of their ongoing lives. That is, these 'irrelevant' parts of the

narratives also can also indicate how they tried to recover meaningfulness in other aspects of their lives, even though these accounts may not directly reflect how they deal with their loss. For example, one elderly widow described her ongoing life with strong associations with the kindness and success of her eldest grandson, who played an important role in reshaping her widowhood. In addition, as conveyed by some interviews, the deceased was not necessarily playing a central role in bereaved people's ongoing lives. A man in his early 30s, who had suffered from uraemia for 10 years, talked more about his own health condition rather than his bereavement in relation to his father. However, as he said, his health condition and the surrounding environments largely contributed to making sense of his father's sudden death and finding meaning for his own life.

Secondary narratives

Compared with the process of conducting the primary interviews, it was relatively simple and straightforward to collect the secondary narratives from TV interviews and online posts, as I only conducted the searching and selection by myself without interacting with the narrators. By utilising a wide range of narratives from different sources, however, I was also faced with challenges in relation to selecting and justifying these narratives. These narratives, as introduced above, were recorded or written for varying non-research purposes. In order to identify the most appropriate data for this research, I carefully selected these narratives to represent the narrators' bereavement experiences as comprehensively as possible. In so doing, I aimed to capture a fuller of picture of these bereaved people's lives as an ongoing process, including their experience before, at and after death of their loved one(s). However, considering the nature of the secondary narratives, I had no control of what and how these narrators interpreted their experiences. As a result, my understanding of their bereavement experience was only restricted to what they had reported without being able to co-construct the narratives. Therefore, these secondary narratives may provide a relatively limited view of bereavement and motivation in comparison approaching them with the primary interviews.

Emotional impact

The painful or even traumatic experiences conveyed in the interviews were not only challenging to the interviews, but could also bring emotional impact to me as a listener. When locating myself in the conversation with the bereaved person, I strove to understand their emotion and experience from his or her viewpoint. Hence, these interviews also had emotional impact on me. The distressing experiences described in the interviews often gave me some negative impressions about life, such as desperation regarding the future and uncertainties in life. Furthermore, situating myself within these narratives sometimes would make me consider how I or my family would react, if we were in the same situation. For instance, after interviewing a father whose son was killed in New Zealand, his experience, especially his son's identity as an international student abroad, made me think it could also happen to me and therefore, would distress my family. Conversely, many memories shared by the interviewees also taught me about the preciousness of life and the importance of family and friends. In addition, I was also encouraged by the reactions of some interviewees at the end of the interviews. In fact, I was afraid that the interviews might upset some of the interviewees; however, I found that none of them felt desperate or uncomfortable when finished. Instead, many of them felt more relaxed, expressed gratitude for being listened to and showed their appreciation for my study. Therefore, these types of responses helped me to realise the significance and meaning of conducting this study and further encouraged me to continue with the data collection until its completion.

Summary

As an exploratory study of bereavement in an environment where this has been little studied, that is, in mainland China, I had to be flexible and creative in adapting established qualitative methods to new situations. Moreover, I had to discover new methods of collecting data in order to gain a more diverse sample of bereaved people in China. In particular, I paid attention to issues regarding how to negotiate with bereaved people as well as third parties, how to be sympathetic and respectful in the overall process of the data collection, and most importantly, how to listen as a friend and a co-constructor in interviews with bereaved people. The more I continued my

fieldwork, the more deeply I felt the complexity of 'culture' in China, that is, it is such a diverse society integrating different ethnic groups, various urban-rural differences and huge regional differences. Therefore, further research could be conducted to focus on specific areas or groups of bereaved Chinese people.

5. Thematic analysis

In order to interpret the primary data from China and the secondary data from Britain and Japan, I adopted a thematic analysis method for investigating the bereavement experience from a comparative framework. More specifically, with a particular focus on motivation, the narratives from different cultural and social groups were analysed and interpreted to illustrate how this shaped and was shaped by bereavement in people's ongoing interactions with society. Furthermore, the analysis involved adopting an inductive approach to identify a range of themes. In so doing, I intended to capture as much information as possible from the data in order to gain a fuller understanding of motivation in bereavement in the 'real' world (Valentine, 2006; 2017). In identifying and explaining motivation in bereavement, for this study, both bereaved people's motivation and their bereavement experiences as socially and culturally constructed have been considered. An interpretivist approach was adopted to clarify the process of social construction of motivation and how it shapes people's bereavement in relation to adaption and meaning-making. As pointed out previously, accounts of lived experiences can explain actions and capture the motivation of speakers (Mills, 1940). Moreover, since 'culture speaks through individuals' (Geertz, 1983), the individual accounts used in this study show how bereaved people make use of language to reconstruct and make sense of their lived experiences of loss, including being motivated to interact with society to deal with their bereavement.

The data have been analysed in three steps: (1) transcription and translation; (2) thematic analysis within and across interviews and cultures; and (3) verification. Based on the narratives collected from various platforms in China, the first step was to transcribe these Chinese interviews and then, to translate all the narratives into English. Subsequently, I applied the thematic analysis method to analyse the narratives from Britain, Japan, China and the group of

Shidu parents separately. With the inductive approach, I was able to generate themes that were generalised from the bereaved people's reported experiences. Furthermore, in order to capture how loss of a loved one's could shape bereaved people's motivation and experiences in their ongoing lives, I analysed all the narratives in the order of before death, at dying and death and after death. Further, by following the three different time frames as broad themes, I further generated sub-themes to capture of the vivid picture of how meaning was constructed with the deceased before death, how dying had challenged this meaning and finally, how motivation had shaped and been shaped by ongoing life after death. After analysing the narratives separately from the different cultures and the social group, I compared them together to identify differences and commonalities in terms of motivation of bereaved people from different background. In order to verify the validity of the themes and the overall analysis, I read through all the narratives again with the themes to make sure they were appropriate.

As explained above, the analysis involved different steps, although special attention was paid to step 2, namely the thematic analysis. In particular, when analysing the Chinese narratives, I had to interpret people's accounts carefully, in which the interviewees spoke about their culture through their personal experiences (Geertz, 1983). As a Chinese person, who shares many values and customs with the interviewees, I could easily have taken what they did in their bereavement for granted, without further seeking why they did so. Hence, in order to elicit their experiences and motivation effectively, I chose to locate myself outside of my Chinese background; thus, I was able to gain more objective insight into their experiences as socio-cultural constructions. In addition, alongside the analysis, I became aware of how the bereaved people from different cultures and social background tended to position themselves differently, reflecting the socio-cultural impact on their ongoing lives (Davies and Harre, 1990).

6. Evaluation

In relation to a more general application, this study is aimed at understanding how bereaved people as social beings adapt to their loss with regard to motivation. Being different from quantitative research, which analyses general data from large scale studies, the qualitative

method deployed for this study focuses on individual experiences. Nevertheless, as pointed out by Geertz (1983), culture speaks through the individual, that is, wider cultural discourses can be demonstrated through individual experiences by understanding how individuals negotiate these discourses. As such, the qualitative representation of individual lives in this study has also provided a more general picture of motivation in bereavement in different cultural contexts. Furthermore, the data from each culture represent a range of bereaved people from various age groups and social background. In particular, the Chinese data were deliberately collected from people bereaved from different types of loss, of different ages and social classes so as to illustrate the social diversity and regional gaps[6] in the country. In addition, the comparative design focusing on three culturally diverse countries enhances the possibility of showing bereavement as both culture-specific as well as a common human experience.

Moreover, the outcomes of this study can enhance understanding of bereavement both in academia and in relation to China, in practice. First, by focusing on the sociological concept of motivation, the discussion in this study will contribute to integrate bereavement study with mainstream sociology by deepening our understanding of both bereavement and human motivation in a sociological sense. Second, the cross-cultural approach not only shows how culture is interwoven into bereaved people's everyday lives, for it also sheds light on everyday bereavement experiences from the largely un-researched culture of mainland China as well as a marginalised group of bereaved people, namely, Shidu parents. Potentially, the findings from this study can contribute to reshaping social policies and the welfare system in China to enhance understanding and support for bereaved people, especially, Shidu parents. In the following four empirical chapters, I present the findings from the analysis of bereavement narratives from the three different cultures: Britain, Japan and China, as well as, a special group of Shidu parents in China.

[6] As will be particularly introduced in chapter 7 on Shidu parents, there are considerable regional gaps in terms of the governmental and social support.

Part Two: Data analysis

Losing a loved one is unquestionably challenging to survivors' ongoing lives from various aspects regardless of socio-cultural background (Marris, 1974; Parkes, 2010, 1986; Valentine, 2007a). Moreover, as demonstrated by a number of studies (Evans, McCarthy et al., 2016; Long, 2004; Marris, 1974; Valentine, 2007a; 2010; 2018), shared traditions and values within a culture play a significant role in shaping bereaved people's experiences. These cultural norms represent shared values and customs of different social groups to which bereaved people belong. They both shape and are shaped by bereaved people's thoughts and actions, through which they make sense of their loss and find the motivation to go on living (Schutz, 1974).

As explained previously, for this study a sociological approach is adopted to probe motivation as a socially constructed procedure, which enables interactions between individual and available socio-cultural norms to serve certain purposes. (Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Schutz, 1974; Weigert, 1975). As is illustrated, when facing uncertainties and shattered meaning after losing a loved one, bereaved people are likely to be motivated to draw on their culture's norms and values as well as their personal resources to deal with the changes and challenges of their bereavement. By so doing, they aim to restore the coherence and consistency of meanings that have been developed from their experiences with the deceased and others, whilst seeking to find new meaning for their ongoing lives without the deceased (Holst-Warhaft, 2000; Valentine, 2007a; 2009a; 2009c; Walter, 1996). In other words, bereaved people's motivation is closely associated with the values and customs constructed and shaped by different groups within the culture. What they have taken for granted, what they draw on to recover shattered meaning and how they do so, in some way reflect the interplay of the norms and values of their culture and sub-cultures.

In order to capture socio-cultural differences in motivation in bereavement, in the part2, an analytic approach to the interview data of bereaved people is developed by looking at bereavement narratives from Britain, Japan, China and a special group of Shidu parents in China. The first analytic chapter (chapter 4) focuses on motivation of bereaved people in Britain, which is chosen to represent a western and individualistic culture. It is followed by analysis of interview data in Chapter 5, where Japan is selected as an example of a society with competing discourses

reflecting both eastern collective cultures and western individualistic values. Further, Chapter 6 will analyse interviews and written materials from bereaved people in mainland China, where primarily collective and traditional values still dominate. Finally, focussing on a group of Chinese bereaved (Shidu) parents, Chapter 7 will analyse these parents' bereavement experiences following the death of an only child in comparison with other bereaved people within Chinese society. In so doing, the aim is to reach a more explicit picture of motivation as an individual and socio-cultural construction that shapes and is shaped by bereaved people's experiences of their ongoing lives according to the context.

Chapter 4

Motivation in bereavement in Britain

Introduction

This chapter depicts an explicit picture of British experiences of bereavement through looking at how people recovered their meaning and reconstructed their motivation in ongoing lives, reflecting a broader view of the interplay between individual experiences and socio-cultural structures in contemporary Britain. Based on 14 interviews collected in Britain, the following discussion focuses on these interviewees' bereavement experiences taken chronologically, that is, before death, the process of death and after death. This format allows consideration of how motivation could be constructed before death, how it could be challenged by dying and death and subsequently, how it could be reshaped after death. Moreover, the last section is dedicated to illustrating the bereavement experiences in Britain in relation to how they were motivated to think and take actions to recover meaning in their ongoing lives, highlighting the individualistic and other diverse social scripts in British society.

1. Background: bereavement in contemporary Britain

As a pioneer of industrialisation and modernisation in human history, Britain has experienced massive transformations in social structures and individual lives. Broadly, it has reached a high level of industrialisation, secularisation and globalisation (Davie, 2000; Valentine, 2007a; Walter, 1994; 2007). Meanwhile, these social changes have become also deeply embodied in British people's everyday lives. By constructing a strong notion of 'self', individual abilities and values have been emphasised in various aspects of individual lives. Further, independence and self-reliance have become key principles for people when dealing with a range of circumstances (Cortois, 2017). In relation to valuing individuality, individual background, characters and rights

have been increasingly recognised, accepted and protected (Bauman, 2001; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Accordingly, contemporary British society has also developed a strong sense of tolerance and pluralism, which is aimed at achieving an integrated society of coexisting people from different social backgrounds and cultures (Walter, 2007). As a result, individuals belonging to multiple groups and communities within which certain values and customs are shared only by their members, are likely to confront what Giddens calls "dilemmas of identity" (Giddens, 1991). In his discussion on modernity and identity, he highlights how individuals living in 'late modernity', no longer dominated by universal standards of rules and customs, are more likely to face uncertainties and confusion of identity. In the past, religion played an important role in providing a reference point for shaping individuals' identities. However, the fast secularisation in Britain has contributed to the decline of religious practices and de-institutionalisation of religion itself. As a result, people tend to adopt an attitude of 'believing without belonging' with more personalised and diverse forms of beliefs and religious practices (Davie, 2000). Thus, many other discourses, such as scientific knowledge, therapy and self-help have emerged as alternative reference systems to help individuals build and rebuild their self-identities (Giddens, 1991).

It is within such a social background that bereaved people negotiate a range of norms and values in order to make sense of their experience. As mentioned in Chapter 1, bereavement has undergone dramatic changes in both academia and the practical world. Reflecting the medicalisation of grief in some academic research, extreme and prolonged grief reactions have been categorised as pathological (Prigerson, 2009). However, there has been a shift in how bereaved westerners, including people in Britain, grieve from emotional control to emotional expressiveness (Doka, 2002; Klass, Silverman et al., 1996). A growing focus on individual difference and socio-cultural diversity has reflected bereavement as more humanised and individualised. That is to say, bereaved people's personal emotions are more respected as well as the notion of continuing bonds with the deceased being an accepted part of bereavement (Riches, 2000; Valentine, 2007a). Meanwhile, bereavement itself is showing a more diverse picture mixed with individual affairs rather and public events (Walter, 1994; 2007). From dying to death, further to bereavement, bereaved people in Britain tend to emphasise individuality and autonomy for the deceased and themselves, while the high level of professionalisation of death

and dying may challenge bereaved people's sense of autonomy and authority over these affairs (Bradbury, 1999; Valentine, 2017; Walter, 1994). As studies have demonstrated, when it comes to finding support for bereavement, counselling professionals and bereavement support groups, some being dedicated to a specific kind of loss, offer spaces in which to share one's grief, find meaning in the death and to recover one's ongoing life (Riches, 2000; Valentine, 2017; Walter, 1994; 2007).

2. The British experience of bereavement

Whilst the cultural high valuing of individuality and autonomy, as mentioned above, shapes British people's bereavement experiences in a broad sense, these values alone cannot fully capture these people's ongoing lives. Rather, in this chapter, I interpret a set of 14 in-depth interviews, of which the majority was collected from middle class and white bereaved people in Britain, to show how they tended to recover their autonomy and individuality by interweaving between a range of socio-cultural discourses (Valentine, 2018). In order to gain an insight into the British experience of bereavement, the following analysis focuses on three dominant themes that capture a constructive process of motivation in relation to loss and bereavement. By looking at their experiences in the chronological order of 'relationships prior to death', 'dying and death' and 'ongoing lives after death', I illustrate a complex interweaving of individualism and interdependency, in which motivation shapes and is shaped by the experience of losing a loved one in the British context.

2.1 Relationships prior to death

Bereavement is a complex of experiences following the loss of a loved one, which involves adapting to a reality of changed relationships with the deceased as well as others (Parkes, 1988; 2010, 1986; Walter, 1996; 1999). By adopting a Schutzian sense of time, everyday life can be seen as being constructed in the continuous flow of time, in which past experiences and knowledge are integrated into current and future lives (Schutz, 1974). As such, bereavement can be seen as

a process of integrating pre-death experiences, including memories and relationships about the deceased, into bereaved people's ongoing lives post-death. As the interviews below show, experiences before death form an important part of these bereaved people's accounts of their bereavement, including how they remembered the 'characters of the deceased' and their 'relationship with the deceased'. By introducing the deceased as part of their taken for granted reality, interviewees' accounts of pre-death experiences can shed light on pre-established meaning systems that could no longer be unquestionably applied to these bereaved people's ongoing lives. Furthermore, these accounts can contribute to understanding their motivation in bereavement in terms of what had changed and what they tended to recover from their loss.

Character of the deceased

As someone who was closely involved in the bereaved person's life, the deceased could often leave different images deeply imprinted in his or her memory. Despite the characters varying in terms of their personal experiences, the bereaved people from the interviews tended to largely reconstruct a positive image of the deceased with a sense of autonomy. For most bereaved people from the interviews, the deceased remained as a positive figure in their reconstruction of their past lives:

> *… my mum was a young woman there was no doubt about it you know – I never saw her as an old person at all – and I think fortunately because it was such an intense short period my memories of my mum are as a younger – a well person. (Tania)*

Whilst sometimes negative images still remained and would cause ambivalent feelings about the deceased, the bereaved person often sought to recover the positivity of the presence of the deceased in their memories:

> *She could be bloody minded… a funny mother – complicated… (but) she could be incredibly kind… she could be incredibly kind and empathetic in a way. (Lynn)*

Apart from the positive character of the deceased, many British interviewees were particularly keen on defining the deceased as having been an independent and capable being in his/her life:

> *… my memories of my mum are as a younger – a well person… (Tania)*

> *So, he was the local church organist, he was clerk to the parish council, he carried on teaching part-time at Exeter university, he was an A level examiner um – various things to keep him busy. (Stephen)*

As shown above, the bereaved interviewees tended to remember the deceased as a positive and autonomous being. However, the deceased person was not an individual isolated from the bereaved person prior to death, for he/she was involved in that person's everyday life. Hence, the character of the deceased was likely to shape his/her relationships with the bereaved person.

Relationships with the deceased

As studies suggest, bereavement may involve a process of adjusting relationships with the deceased in a changed reality (Attig, 2011; Bowlby, 1969; Parkes, 1988; Valentine, 2007a). Accordingly, the relationships developed before death could fundamentally shape people's experiences of their bereavement. This section examines how the sample of bereaved people reconstructed accounts of their lives by piecing together moments in relation to the deceased. More specifically, by analytically describing two themes of 'positive relationships' and 'negative relationships', I further shed light on what bereaved people valued under the broader picture of socio-cultural emphasis on individual lives. As such, the values and meaning constructed and shared with the person before they died could subsequently shape bereaved people's motivation as well as their experiences in their ongoing lives after the death.

Positive relationships

In the interviews, the majority of the bereaved people described the relationships with the deceased from a positive perspective. Despite these relationships taking different forms, there

were some shared values that these people cherished in their relationships with the deceased, including intimacy as well as the abilities and autonomy of both the bereaved and deceased.

For some interviewees, the intimacy could be seen in frequent contact with the deceased, which had constituted a large part of their lives:

> *I used to go up – I used to spend all my holidays up with her – so she's always been a major part of my life really. (Lynn)*

Sometimes, the intimacy involved shared life stories through which mutual understandings and increased intimacy developed:

> *… he (my dad) was a big part of the story – a lot of it centred around him – a lot of it and so our story that nobody else on the planet could possibly even begin to imagine…I think that's why we're so close, 'cos nobody else could begin to comprehend our story, but we've all had the same lived experience of this story which revolves around our mum and our dad. (Adrian)*

Such intimacy with the deceased could include a sense of shared strength and ability that was unique to that relationship, making it special. For example, Tania put her strength down to her mother having always stood up for her and Sarah attributed her artistic ability to her grandmother:

> *all through my life as a child as an adult I've always had total and utter confidence that my mum would stand up for me in any situation no matter what – 100 % absolute unquestioning. (Tania)*

> *I do a lot of art and she's the only other person in the close kin who does any art, so that's sort of – I feel a link with her. (Sarah)*

By acknowledging the deceased person's support to their autonomy, as shown from the interviews, many bereaved people had integrated the priority of individual values and abilities, while trying to make sense of the relationships with the deceased. Further, this perspective could also be adopted when the bereaved people were trying to rethink the deceased in their built-up

relationships. In particular, in the cases of loss that had involved a prolonged and often suffering dying process, the bereaved people sometimes purposively recollected relationships before the deceased had lost his/her autonomy so as to regain a more positive image of that person as an independent and capable being:

> *... suddenly you started to remember what he was like before he got ill and so throughout the summer I was having sort of these continuous like little sort of flashbacks to when we were on holiday here or doing something and you remembered all the kind of idiosyncrasies and oddities about, you know, in a sense when they were well. (Stephen)*

As illustrated above, the positive nature of relationships with the deceased was a significant factor in these bereaved people's accounts of their lives prior to their death. These relationships were primarily developed from frequent contacts and mutual understandings between the two parties and also reflected the cultural valuing of the autonomy of both the bereaved and deceased. As precious memories about the deceased, positive relationships represented a considerable part of the bereaved people's lives before death and would further shape their motivation and experiences in bereavement, as will be explained later.

Negative relationships

Whilst most interviewees tended to recollect the positivity of their relationships with the deceased, some of them also conveyed an ambivalent picture of positive mixed with negative images. In contrast to the positive relationships, negative ones exhibited distance and contradictions between the two parties. When recollecting their experiences, some of the bereaved people described their relationships with the deceased as 'distant', especially in comparison with someone else with whom they had closer relationships:

> *… my mum's always been my sort of sounding board on an intellectual level - with her I've always related to her very much so. With dad (the deceased) it's always been – we've had quite a distant relationship… (Roy)*

The distance was caused for a range of reasons, but it seems for the bereaved people concerned this reflected a lack of interaction with and support from the deceased:

> *I think there are just 2 memories I have of him, not having a conversation but sat with him. (Sarah)*

> *but when I had, um, I used to have very very bad depression… and it got really bad, um and I told her about it once and she said 'oh don't be so bloody stupid…' (Lynn)*

In addition, there could also be discrepancies in values and life-style between the bereaved person and the deceased, which then become part of how the relationship was remembered:

> *So, I grew up with this feeling that he was authoritative and a bit of a jack the lad sort of thing, um, to look at it one way… I used to go hitch-hiking and I used to like getting stoned, um and he could see all that and he didn't like it. And then when I went to university, he just thought it was another excuse not to work again – which partially it was I suppose. (Brian)*

As discussed above, in Britain there is a cultural valuing of independence and self-determination. Hence, if the deceased had challenged their individuality and autonomy, the bereaved person might have some negative feelings about the relationship with him/her.

Whilst the deceased might not have been perfect in the bereaved people's memories, many of them still tried to recover the 'goodness' from the negative relationship so as to create a more positive picture of he or she who had died. In so doing, they might try to integrate these positive relationships with the deceased into their ongoing lives rather than negative thoughts:

> *I mean, they weren't all good memories… but he was a good father and a good husband really– and I miss him, I still miss him. (Elisabeth)*

Summary: Nature of the relationships

In the interviews, these British bereaved people presented a vivid picture of their experiences, which was largely made up of the intimate and independent relationships between themselves and the deceased prior to death. The nature of these relationships, as discussed above, is strongly associated with how much the deceased had been involved in the bereaved people's lives, as well as, how much their individual values had been admired by the deceased. In most cases, the bereaved people in Britain had reconstructed and recovered generally positive relationships with the deceased, although a few of them still had a strong sense of negativity about their relationships.

As shown above, the positive relationships with the deceased consisted a significant part of the bereaved people's lives before death, thus largely shaping their perceptions of themselves as well as their everyday experiences. As a result, losing someone intimate could profoundly challenge the bereaved people's taken-for-granted meaning and their overall lives:

> *We were married for 18 years anyway, so er, you know, when we first met each other we clicked straight away and we did everything together… our whole life changed… So I've changed from that perspective as well, um, I'm trying to look after the children financially and emotionally - and a whole change of life. (Elisabeth)*

Conversely, the negative relationships with the deceased were less likely to be largely integrated to the bereaved person's meaning in life before the loss. Accordingly, loss of such a person would have less impact on the ongoing flow of meaning in their everyday lives, especially in comparison with the loss of someone else who they considered as 'closer':

> *We weren't particularly close to Grandpa – we knew him when we were kids and he was our Grandfather, but it's not like boohoo our world ended. (Sarah)*

2.2 Dying and death

Losing someone close, as argued, is likely to challenge bereaved people's daily routines that they have taken for granted (2014; Attig, 2011; Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Parkes, 1988; Schutz, 1974). As a sequence of events marking changing realities before and after loss, bereaved people's accounts of how the person died appeared to represent an important part of the interview (Valentine, 2007a). By reconstructing their experiences about the dying and death of someone loved, the bereaved people in the sample not only accounted for how these had challenged and changed their lives, but also, how they attempted to make sense of and integrate these experiences into their ongoing lives. Furthermore, by shedding light on available scripts in British society, these bereaved people conveyed a dynamic and complex picture in which they drew on individualistic as well as other social scripts to deal with and justify dying and death of their loved one.

Constructing a dying process

Dying may involve prolonged processes of terminal illness or aging. In a society with advanced medical support and high life expectancy (Walter, 1994; 1999), death is likely to take place after a period of dying, during which bereaved people may be able to spend a considerable amount of time with the dying person (Williiams and Calnan, 1996). As shown in the interviews, many participants experienced and recollected the dying process as involving both intimate individuals and professionals, home and institutions, thus reflecting an ambivalent picture of the dying person as an individual in a context of the medicalisation and institutionalisation of dying (Howarth, 2007; Valentine, 2007a). By facing dying, it was not only a process with increasing pathological symptoms and declining capabilities of the deceased, but also a mixed picture of different parties being involved within and between different contexts. Considering the nature of dying, the suffering and loss throughout the process were likely to devastate not only the dying person, but also the interviewee as well as others who were involved. Further, the case could be found to be even more difficult for the bereaved due to frustrations caused by broader systems and structures. As a result of such negative experiences, there could be a sense of difficulty and distress. On the other hand, when facing the difficulties of dying, some bereaved people from

the sample also showed their motivation for seeking positive explanations from different discourses in order to make sense of the process of losing a loved and once healthy, independent and capable being.

Defining a difficult dying

As explained above, dying can bring variant changes to the different parties involved in the process. The bereaved people might find it difficult to witness physical suffering and the weakening autonomy of the deceased. In the process of experiencing dying, both the deceased and the bereaved can suffer from difficulties caused by the physical symptoms of the former. Physical struggle was primarily associated with the feeling of a 'difficult' dying in relation to increasing pain and declining functions of the body:

> *She suffered very badly from arthritis… Because she got weaker and weaker and also, because she was on drugs, which were obviously soporific, anyway – morphine and things to relieve the pain. (Lynn)*

In response to physical suffering, advanced care and medical services could help to ease pain and decelerate the dying process. However, such medical intervention sometimes could escalate suffering of the deceased, which might further result in the bereaved person becoming distressed and feeling helpless:

> *… they couldn't do radiotherapy or chemotherapy in any great measure, because he had Crohn's disease. It was compounded by that, so all the doctors could do was book him in for an operation to check the Crohn's scarring to see if that was affecting his system, as it were. They found out that it wasn't, but then he had, um – I can't remember – the body reacted to the anesthetic they think and his whole innards collapsed – I'm not sure what the – the body had a bad reaction to the anaesthetic – So, having gone into hospital his bowels were affected so they had to attach a stoma to the system. A stoma's what takes the water and all the stuff out and er that affected dad quite a lot. (Roy)*

Moreover, the medical system itself might also increase uncertainties of the deceased's symptoms and diagnosis, which could easily further undermine the bereaved person's sense making of the dying:

> *… we couldn't talk to the consultant who was there at the time, the one who'd talked to me initially, because he'd moved on. Because I know my mum wants to talk to everybody who was on his team. There's no sort of continuity of care. I mean apparently. they're taught at medical school to go with the first diagnosis. Well. what kind of teaching is that – go with the first diagnosis? I mean you know it really is absurd. (Adrian)*

In addition, the widespread medicalisation of society could also expose brutal facts about the dying person to the bereaved, by providing him/her with detailed medical knowledge:

> *… they did these blood tests and he said if it comes between 0 and – it's up to 20 – then I think it's ok. If it's over 20 to 30 or something, then, maybe we can do surgery here. But if it's over then, she'll go to the Queen Elizabeth, which is a specialist hospital and they hadn't got the results - and then the consultant called me over and he showed me it was 1,170. (Tania)*

When witnessing the physical suffering of the loved one, the bereaved person often had to face emotional struggle of feeling frustrated and further, a sense of incompetency:

> *… it was like an emotional roller coaster 'cos your father's in so much pain and unable to help himself and literally to pick him up out of the chair you'd sort of… hands on your shoulder and you'd lift him up. (Roy)*

Apart from the suffering and distress caused by physical symptoms, the declining capabilities and independence of the deceased as an autonomous being could also contribute to escalating the sense of difficulty, for not only the deceased, but also the bereaved in the dying process. As a person who was experiencing dying, the deceased, as remembered by the bereaved person, often struggled with losing strength and independence:

> *… the growth had actually grown up to fill the roof of her mouth and it was all sort of coming over her nose and it was all erupting. So, she had bandages all round and she was always a very proud woman about how she looked and everything… It was very difficult for her because she was always a great reader and she couldn't read anymore… (Lynn)*

As a result, the growing dependence of the deceased might cause difficulties for the lives of other people, in particular, family members:

> *So, for about the first 2 years of his illness he became increasingly a major problem for my stepmother to look after… particularly for the last two years and there were a couple of times when I took him to Exeter and he'd need to go to the toilet and you'd take him into a public toilet and basically you'd have to do pretty well everything for him and you could see that I hated doing it… (Stephen)*

In respond to such situations, the dying process was often institutionalised in caring and medical premises, such as residential homes, hospices and hospitals (Howarth, 2007; Walter, 1994). However, the dying person might express resistance to such institutions where he or she were being managed by professionals rather than his or her self, due to his/her strong sense of themselves as an autonomous being:

> *… she was put in this residential home which she hated – my mother was a very forceful character – very very strong character and she hated it.... (Lynn)*

Meanwhile, the atmosphere within such institutions was also reported as affecting the bereaved person by creating feelings of depression and devastation working against the positive sense of life and autonomy:

> *… the problem with old people's homes is that they're full of people waiting to die and you know it just has that atmosphere and just sort of decay and sort of waiting for death really… it just reminds you of that kind of really horrible atmosphere in the old people's home… (Stephen)*

By facing the weakening autonomy of the deceased, some bereaved interviewees particularly found the dying process difficult, especially in the light of holding images of the dying person as a capable and independent being that the bereaved person had previously taken for granted:

> *… she travelled across America you know and went to Las Vegas and things like that – it just makes you think – she was a very strong woman. So in the end when it – I think I would have been happier, if it was a clean end. (Brian)*

As shown in the accounts above, in general, the bereaved people from the samples reconstructed the dying as a difficult process. The 'difficulties' were not only attributed to the physical pain and degeneration of the body of the deceased, for they were also greatly associated with the challenges to the sense of capability and independence. That is to say, the dying process was likely to threaten the sense of identity of the deceased as an intimate, independent and capable being that had been developed between him or her and the bereaved person:

> *In a sense, you know basically, he had stopped being capable of being your father. He was just someone who you had formerly known as your father, who was just sitting in a chair just not doing anything. (Stephen)*

Dignifying the dying process

As mentioned above, the dying of a loved one was very often considered a difficult process, which shattered the sense of how the bereaved had made sense of the deceased as well as themselves. However, in spite of the negativity, such as the degeneration of the body and denial of autonomy along with the process, a positive picture of the hard time was also often drawn out by the interviewees to reconstruct a more a more dignified journey of the deceased as a strong, intimate as well as autonomous person. In the following, the discussion focuses on how these bereaved people were motivated to recover the sense of meaning in relation to reshaping the identity of and the relationships with the deceased, as well as, humanising and accepting the naturalness of the dying process.

First, despite the dying person was often being remembered as experiencing constant deterioration along with losing the sense of being a capable and autonomous being, many bereaved people in the interviews still tried to recover the sense of a strong and capable identity of the deceased through finding his or her internal strength:

> *She never ever cried – she's got such amazing courage you know… I am very proud of her – I just feel the way she handled herself, especially the news that she had cancer and everything, there's not one minute that she didn't put us before herself – there's not one minute that she didn't try and make it easier for us. And I think she showed tremendous dignity… I think no she's still was positive and courageous and you know my mum's no fool – she had a damn good idea, but I think she was still optimistic and that I find encouraging. (Tania)*

In so doing, such a strong and optimistic sense of identity was remembered and further interpreted by the bereaved person to dignify the dying person in opposition to the different kinds of loss caused by the difficulties in dying.

Second, as reported in the previous section, whilst the dying process might interfere with the existing social circles, it was also likely to enhance the relationships with the bereaved person as well as others. By staying closely with the dying person over the period, some interviewees found the dying process could provide opportunities of maintaining and even reinforcing their relationship with deceased:

> *That's made this easier for me, because I think I've done – I had a really good relationship with him and I don't think – there's no regrets. I couldn't have done more to see him or be in touch. … he was conscious enough to lean over and give me a hug, which was an amazing thing. (Adrian)*

At the same time, the dying process could also be found as being 'beneficial' in enhancing the deceased's social life by providing chances for bringing different people together:

You look back on it now and say actually it had beneficial consequences on the whole. So, likewise with his death you sort of, you know – 'cos it was one of the things which actually did bring my mother and stepmother back together. (Stephen)

As such, the prolonged dying was not necessarily a destructive process of undermining the sense of intimacy and relationality of the deceased, but rather, an important period of developing and refining the relationships with him or her.

Third, despite the medicalisation and institutionalisation being reported as strongly shaping the dying process in the sense of dehumanisation of the deceased, the bereaved people were also keen to seek comfort, relief and a sense of support from care and medical professionals:

… they were very good – there were social workers who would come and talk to you and things – and the people there were wonderful… I felt in some ways relieved, because A, she hated where she was, B, she wasn't getting sufficient care – although the people – they're care workers they're not nurses – you know – and I thought perhaps she'd be more comfortable – she would actually have some proper medication to help relieve the pain. (Lynn)

In addition, it has been documented that the professionalisation of the dying process does not necessarily undermine the quality of dying (Valentine, 2007a). Accordingly, some bereaved people in the interviews showed their intention of prioritising the naturalness of dying, reporting how they had exercised agency in the process to lessen the suffering and have more dignity for their loved one:

St. Martins (hospital) was talking about putting a tube in, you know, you're not gonna do that. She's got to have some dignity and some control over what's happening… of course we were letting Evelyn (the deceased) set the pace as well – 'cos gosh she was such an alive woman that I didn't want to remove all kind of power and dignity from her. (Pat)

By reconstructing the internal strength, relationships, humanisation and naturalness throughout the dying process, many bereaved people in the interviews could restore a more positive picture of the deceased as a strong, intimate, capable and self-sufficient person. In so doing, they tended to recover their taken-for-granted sense of meaning encompassing intimacy and autonomy, but also to integrate the meaning into their ongoing lives.

Defining the nature of death

Death itself can be seen as a biological ending of a functioning human body; however, the nature of death perceived by survivors is essentially social, reflecting the cultural values and emphases of a society as well as how these are adapted by groups and individuals within that society (O'Connor, 2016). Death has long been endowed with functions and meanings by human societies, particularly as a social transition in relation to managing and reducing its disruptive impact on the social order, thereby stabilising the life flow of bereaved people (Durkheim, 1912; Gennep, 1960; Hertz, 1907, 2004; Malinowski and Redfield, 2004). In Britain where has been highly medicalised and professionalised, it has been found that the management of dying and death by professionals may have a profound impact on the bereaved person's experience of the death being 'good' or 'bad' (Bradbury, 1999; Copp, 1998). However, alongside more mainstream professionalisation and medicalisation, there are alternative approaches to death and dying that emphasise more 'naturalistic', 'humanistic' and spiritual values of the two (Cobb, 2001; Saunders, 1970), emphasising whether a death is 'good' or 'bad' is depending on the quality of life and the degree of agency of the dying person.

In reality, as demonstrated in the interviews, bereaved people's perceptions of whether a death is good or bad are not clearly dichotomous, but rather, fluid, showing an interweaving of professionalised/medicalised and more humanised understandings of death. In the following, the experiences based on the interviews are reported to show how the death of a loved one could be perceived and interpreted in a dynamic and complex way by focusing on two themes: 'confronting a bad death' and 'justifying a death'. Despite these two themes being discussed

separately, the boundary between the two was often blurred in terms of bereaved people's feelings towards the death.

Confronting a bad death

As discussed above, the debates on the nature of death and whether it is 'bad' and 'good' in Britain have reflected bereaved individuals' ambiguous and diverse relationships with broader discourses, including their emphasis on the individuality of the deceased, the bereaved and others involved. The death of a loved one is generally considered as upsetting and distressing to survivors. Further, as reported in other studies, the distressing and shocking nature of death could also be escalated by different circumstances involved in death and different discourses that the bereaved people use to make sense of death (Bradbury, 1999; Valentine, 2007a). In an individualistic society without strictly fixed standards for evaluating death, as shown from the accounts, the bereaved people might confront and perceive a death as bad in various ways, showing a mixture of diverse social expectations and individual judgements on death.

First, in a highly medicalised society, death itself is often explained and understood through medical discourses (Howarth, 2007). As shown above, many interviewees expressed their discomfort and distress by applying medical knowledge to make sense of the dying and death of their loved one. Moreover, lack of a medical explanation for the death could also trigger a negative sense towards it for the bereaved person, leaving the it questionable and hard to make sense of:

> *… because there was a suspected cancer – and by the way, they didn't know this at the time, although if they had known then there are questions to be asked there too. And there are many many questions. (Adrian)*

As a result, the bereaved person might resort to alternative resources of medical knowledge to seek explanation and thus, make sense of the death:

> *I did look on the internet to find out what a renal artery aneurysm was and it did say that in 97% of cases it can be managed… I mean I just like to cling onto*

this idea that, yes, he was gonna get cancer and die a horrible drawn out death and maybe this was for the best, but again maybe that's the story I've taken on for myself, 'cos I find it easier to cope with that one. (Adrian)

Second, whether the death was sudden or prolonged was also reported to have a strong impact on whether it was considered good or bad. For those who experienced the sudden death of a loved one, it tended to be shocking and leave the bereaved person little prepared. Hence, they often had to face an emotional struggle to believe and understand such a death:

I think you wave goodbye to somebody in the morning and you expect to see them again in the evening and yeah, um, pretty horrendous… I was angry – I went home and smashed a few cups up. It was numbness really. I didn't honestly believe it. (Elisabeth)

Meanwhile, a sudden death could also be understood and justified in a positive sense by comparing it with one following a prolonged and suffering dying process. In other words, a prolonged death accompanied by a deteriorating body and declining autonomy, was also likely to be defined as 'bad':

Yes, if he was ill, you know there would be a big build up and we'd, I think that would be quite horrible I suppose, I can imagine. (Mike)

Third, apart from medicalisation and whether death is sudden or prolonged, as discussed above, a bad death was also profoundly shaped by the notion of it being untimely. Since medical advances and increased public health have dramatically reduced young deaths and increased life expectancy (Ariès, 1981; Walter, 1994), death is expected to happen in the later stages of life. As shown in the interviews, such expectations were deeply embodied in the participants' assumptions about their lives in relation to others. As a result, an untimely death was likely to challenge or even overturn those assumptions, therefore, being considered 'bad':

I never realised until this and of course now I think, of course, well we're not going to have [our son]'s children …there's a comfort in knowing that, that one day he would have had children, because he said that he wanted children

> *one day… he would have brought his children back and he would have wanted us to be part of their lives and that's a tragedy and a blessing [crying]. (Eleanor)*

In cases in which the deceased was a child, the parents found the situation even more difficult to face and make sense of, as it was outside their expectations:

> *… you know that at some point in your life you're going to have to cope with the death of your parent, don't you?... And, whereas you think you're not going to have to deal with the death of your child. (Eleanor)*

However, age was not the only criterion to define an untimely death, in fact, it was more likely to depend on to what extent the bereaved person had expected the deceased to be an active and continuous presence in their lives before death:

> *… he was born in 1945, in April, so he'd have been just coming up to 59 when he died, which is not that old. (Patrick)*

Fourth, the sense of badness could also be associated with certain causes of death, which were considered unacceptable or inappropriate. For example, one parental couple found that considering their son's death as a suicide, rather than an accidental overdose of drugs was much harder to face:

> *… it helps me to cope with [our son]'s death by knowing that it was an accidental overdose. Because suicide would be unbearable, to know that your child was feeling so negative that they didn't want to exist anymore, despite your presence… (Mike)*

As shown above, the father's response reflected his concerns with the quality of his deceased son's life before the death. In other words, a positive and self-determined image of him was an important contributor to reducing the negative impact of an unacceptable death. Meanwhile, issues related to the cause of death could also reflect certain socially shared values and expectations of what was an appropriate one. For example, for the parent bereaved from his

son's drug-related death, the shame and stigma were countered by the quality and value of their son's life:

> *… that was nothing to be ashamed about, that's what made [our son] such a fascinating young man, and he was such an interesting person, he really was. (Mike)*

These examples have demonstrated that the British interviewees tended to define a death as bad from different perspectives, reflecting a diversity of discourses and values shared and emphasised between individuals and social groups. In general, similar to the findings on dying, the participants particularly found a death bad when it challenged the image of the deceased as an autonomous and active being in their continuing lives. Apart from concerns for individual values, social expectations of certain types of death could, more or less, shape their understanding of the nature of death and bring pressure to reconstruct goodness from it. Moreover, as also conveyed in the narratives, many of them actively tried to resist a bad death by turning to the diverse set of values and norms available in the British society.

Justifying a death

Opposite to a bad death, a good death refers to what was good in terms of the reality of death, strongly reflecting socio-cultural values (Bradbury, 1999; Valentine, 2009a). When focusing on the conceptualisation of a good death in medicalised and institutionalised contexts in hospices in Australia, McNamara et al. (1995) decided that "death is defined as 'good' if there is an awareness, acceptance and preparation for death by all those concerned" (p. 222). In particular, they discussed how nurses in those contexts attempted to adopt the notion of 'good death' as a coping strategy to deal with the stress relating to the sensitive nature of working with death and dying. Similarly, as those closely involved in the process of dying and death, the bereaved persons also reported their motivation and actual actions of seeking goodness from death.

First, as introduced above, a good death was seen as one that involved a more humanised and naturalised dying process. A death could be defined as good, if it was a peaceful one:

It was incredibly peaceful actually – it was – 'cos as I say she was – we got there and she was sort of asleep or whatever. (Lynn)

Second, the naturalness in death was also closely associated with a sense of timeliness. In comparison with an untimely and therefore, bad death, a death at an older age, which was socially considered more natural, particularly if expected, was likely to be defined a good one:

I think about those people in that awful tsunami disaster, you know and you hear about children, I mean the other day, that child being shot with an air rifle and then you kind of put things in perspective and my dad really did have - you know he burnt the candle at both ends as well. (Adrian)

He was about 85, so quite a good age. (Brian)

Third, as well as considering the perspective of the deceased, the bereaved person might also justify death by taking the position of other people involved, including themselves:

So actually, when the person dies it's – the initial reaction is one of almost thank god for that, now we (the bereaved, his mother and step-mother) can stop having to worry about this… (Stephen)

As shown here, death could be defined as good in relation to enabling others involved in death and dying to regain their independence from providing care to the dying person.

In discussing death as either bad or good, I have illustrated a diverse picture of understanding the event in relation to the deceased, the bereaved people and as well as others. Death, in general, presented negativity and badness to the survivors in terms of undermining the life quality and autonomy of all the people involved and questioning bereaved people's expectations on life and death. Moreover, as found in the interviews, these bereaved people also tended to draw on available resources to overcome the badness and seek goodness from the death itself, as a means of making sense of it and further integrating it into the sense of meaning in ongoing lives.

Summary: a mixed picture of death and dying

The accounts above show how the interviewees reconstructed the dying and death of their loved one as having both positive and negative elements in almost all cases. I found a great diversity in relation to how they talked about how the person died. Thus, it can reflect a multi-cultural background in contemporary British society, where different values and norms are shared by different social groups instead of the society as a whole (Walter, 2007). However, these interviews predominantly illustrate a cultural emphasis on individuality and autonomy for the deceased as well as other people involved. Furthermore, in attempting to connect their life before and after death, the bereaved person showed mixed feelings in relation to death and dying. By looking at this mixed picture in Britain, it has shed light on how dying and death can shape the taken-for-granted relationships with the deceased and the sense of meaning for life built prior to death. Moreover, it could further contribute to exploring these challenges and changes would be faced and adapted by the bereaved people in their ongoing lives.

2.3 Ongoing lives after death

Following the death of a beloved, bereaved people will have to face various changes in their ongoing lives and hence, they have to confront how to deal with the changed world with regards to different aspects of their lives (Attig, 2011; Marris, 1974; Parkes, 1988; Valentine, 2007a). As I have illustrated so far, bereaved people in Britain tend to construct their everyday lives prior to death in a close relationship with the deceased with a strong sense of individuality and autonomy for the deceased, themselves and other family members. As a consequence of the loss, the bereaved person is often faced with how to deal with their bereavement, in which they face having to adjust to a changed reality and how to carry on their lives. In this section, the discussion will focus on the focal bereaved people's experiences after death to explore how they were motivated to take various actions in order to adjust their relationship with the deceased and to recover the sense of meaning for themselves in their ongoing lives. To capture the continuous and dynamic process of bereavement, this section develops the discussion on experiences and motivation in bereavement in Britain through two broad themes: 'facing the impact of death'

and ‘dealing with bereavement’. In so doing, I aim to explain how motivation has been reconstructed in these bereaved people’s daily lives.

Facing the impact of death

The impact of the death of a loved one can be enormous and continuous regarding various aspects of bereaved people’s ongoing lives (Holst-Warhaft, 2000; Marris, 1974; Riches, 2000; Valentine, 2007a). In Britain, as indicated above, the interviewees developed strong emotional bonds with the deceased, along with a powerful sense of autonomy and independence in their lives before death. However, the death was likely to challenge such a taken-for-granted life perspective, leaving many parts of it questionable and meaningless. In order to capture the diversity of effects of this process, in the following, the sub-themes of ‘emotional impact’, ‘economic impact’, ‘practical impact’, ‘bureaucratic impact’, and ‘social impact’ are addressed.

Emotional impact

The bereaved interviewees who had developed an intimate relationship with the deceased were likely to experience intense emotional shock as well as instability following the death:

> *… cos grandma had a worse reaction – I was very upset, because I was very close to her – I was always a bit of a mummy’s boy, so you know – I prefer the company of women. (Brian)*

The emotional distress of losing a loved one could be further intensified by the realisation of the physical absence of the deceased:

> *I get these awful sort of realisations that in this whole vast universe, this wide vast expanse of – I will never be able to physically give my dad a hug again and that really brings it home, that this. (Adrian)*

In cases in which the death was unexpected and experienced as senseless, the bereaved person was likely to suffer from ‘extraordinary’ emotional pain:

Because there's no point living, the pain, the grief was just so, extraordinary. And it's just as intense now. It's just more controlled really. (Mike)

Beyond an individual perspective, the emotional distress could also be 'interconnected' with other family members, reflecting a strong sense of family solidarity, with considerable impact on the family as a whole:

But their grief is my grief and my grief is their (family members) grief – I mean it's so interconnected (Adrian)

However, the emotional impact could be double edged, particularly in relation to a death following prolonged dying during which the dying person needed a lot of care and support:

I then obviously spent most of the evening – to start with the initial reaction was kind of like numbness and a sort of relief and the grief. (Stephen)

As shown above, the death itself could be distressing and therefore, likely to be emotionally challenging for the bereaved person, but it could also be associated with positive emotions, such as relief. Further, based on the interviews, gender and age differences have not emerged as a major factor in the emotional aspect. This is likely to be associated with the diversity of the sample, which includes the bereaved people from different genders and age groups.

Economic impact

The economic impact of death has been studied both within and across countries to show the implications this could have on bereaved people's lives (Evans, McCarthy et al., 2016; Marris, 1974; Wei, 2013; Woodthorpe, 2014a; 2014b). In the British samples, since the majority of the interviewees were from a middle-class background, they had shown relatively stable financial conditions and a strong sense of independence in their economic lives. Therefore, the concerns with economic difficulties were only raised in few accounts. For instance, Elisabeth addressed her struggle after losing her husband as the main source of income for the family:

… our whole life changed, because I mean he didn't have any life insurance I hadn't worked before – well not since - my oldest child was mine – I was a single mum and he adopted her – then we had the other two, so I hadn't worked since I had the other two and I thought 'my god what I'm I gonna do – I haven't worked for 19 years'. (Elisabeth)

Economic difficulties were not necessarily restricted to losing financial security for daily lives, for they could also be related to funeral expenses. For example, the high cost of burial profoundly restricted a bereaved grandson from exercising his and his family's agency to have a preferred disposal method, which thus brought emotional distress:

I was very upset –very upset at my grandma's funeral. That was a burning too – we can't afford to bury – it's too expensive to bury and it's not sustainable… Cremation's cheap and burial's expensive. (Eleanor)

Further, hardly any of the interviewees mentioned financial issues in terms of funeral costs, some studies have highlighted funeral poverty in Britain and its impact on bereaved people's lives in relation to their sense of agency (Valentine and Woodthorpe, 2014).

Practical impact

Alongside the economic impact, some practical issues were also reported by some interviewees as disruption to their everyday lives. For example, one bereaved wife, who was faced with economic difficulties, also reported practical difficulties related to having been dependent on the deceased for house maintenance:

… the sort of shower leaked a couple of months ago and I thought oh my god, I've got to change the shower, why the hell did you have to die, you know, I need you? And it's the silly things you know – the fence falls down and oh god, if Andy were here he'd put it up just like that, you know and I'm struggling to do it. (Elisabeth)

The practical impact was not only restricted to lack of support for daily chores, for sometimes, the bereaved person also had to take over responsibilities that were previously carried by the deceased:

> *I seemed to sort of take over the, you know, looking after my dad and my sister… when you had to go and sign things, I said 'ok I'll come up. So, I very much seemed to take over and do that role. (Tania)*

Bureaucratic impact

As part of the impact on the everyday life of individuals, the death of someone close can also involve dealing with the complex bureaucratic procedures of processing a death (Orr and Orr, 2016; Walter, 1994). As mentioned above, society, as a whole, tends to manage the death of its members in a way that stabilises the social order as well as to reducing the risks for bereaved people's lives. In a highly bureaucratised context, death often has to go through certain complicated procedures under regulations and laws:

> *… you know you have to get the death certificate, you have to sort out, you know banks and building societies, so you're actually mentally quite busy. (Elisabeth)*

In particular, if the death was suspect, interference from the authorities could severely undermine the bereaved person's control over their own grief, as reported by a father whose son died owing to a drug-related incident:

> *… we stayed in our front room and people were coming and going and we didn't really know. The detective came and spoke to us… And then they went, we didn't, [our son] obviously was taken away, we didn't know anything about that. (James)*

If death occurs in a foreign country, the process will be even more complicated and frustrating to the bereaved person. For example, one couple was faced with various procedures to deal with their son' s sudden death in Thailand:

> *We had so much to do and it didn't really sink in, did it? We had to sort out things that we needed to do at the British Embassy in Bangkok. We had to sort out an undertaker, we had to sort out things with the Police, we had to get all sorts of release forms and cremation forms and death certificates and so on and so forth, but they weren't really helpful. (Mike)*

> *We didn't want him to go in the hold; we wanted him to be with us in the cabin. So, we had to get a special certificate for all of that (Eleanor).*

As shown above, the bureaucratisation of death had seemly distracted the bereaved persons from facing death itself, whilst also undermining their agency in being competent in dealing with death in their own way.

Social impact

As a social being, death of a loved one is also likely to affect the bereaved person's social circles, including not just other family members, but also others in different contexts. When losing a family member, the bereaved person often has to face changed relationships with not only the deceased, but also other family members. On the one hand, death of a family member is likely to destabilise relationships with other members, for example, in terms of who is the one responsible for dealing with the gravestone:

> *The only problem, which unfortunately we've had is that, um, we still haven't managed to get anything organised for a bloody headstone, which is a bit ….. Unfortunately, my stepmother, who, um, kind of we felt should have made a bit more of an effort to sort of do something about it, because at the end of the day she inherited most of the goods and chattels as it were. (Stephen)*

One the other hand, by facing a shared loss in the family, the death could enhance bonds between family members to deal with various challenges:

> *We're not – we're a close family but we're not in constant contact - so it's strange when something like that happens and maybe you realise that maybe we are a bit closer than we actually think, you know. (Brian)*

It was also the case that an authoritative family member could be debilitated by the death and as a result, become dependent on the bereaved person. As a consequence, the changed relationship could motivate the bereaved person to accept and take on the situation in order to maintain family relationships:

> *I felt like dad had become weaker as a person and now I'd become stronger in the family. (Brian)*

Apart from family, people surrounding the bereaved person might also react to the death in different ways, which is likely to shape the relationships. From a perspective of others in the bereaved person's life, such as, friends, colleagues and neighbours, they, as outsiders, often show sympathy and support, as reported by many interviewees:

> *… I remember one of the mature students came and said I'm very sorry to hear about your mum – my mum died about 6 years ago and she was really nice – and I still talk to her everyday and that was the sort of thing – you got very kind comments like that – people were very nice. (Lynn)*

> *my work is quite intense and if I didn't have time, because I, you know, I burst into tears ten dozen times a day and so I have to have time for that and they allow me the space to do that. (Mike)*

Meanwhile, from the perspective of the bereaved person, the death could motivate them to enhance and rebuild relationships with others in their lives:

> *I recognised everybody, but the problem was I don't know the names of half of these people and it feels awful you know, 'cos I want to go and find them and*

talk to them, you know these people that I've seen over the years… through my dad – I mean it was my dad's world and I sort of entered into that... (Adrian)

The accounts above, in general, have provided a sense of enhanced relationships in the bereaved person's social life following death. Further, by considering the individualistic background, death was likely to provide an opportunity for the bereaved person to redefine their relationships with family members and other people in life.

Summary: facing changing relationships in everyday lives

Death has various effects on different aspects of the bereaved person's ongoing life. Following the loss of someone close, the bereaved person was likely to face not only a changing relationship with the deceased, but also, the disruption of their daily routines as well as their plans and hopes for the future. Furthermore, as shown above, the interviewees in Britain tended to develop intimate and idiosyncratic relationships with the deceased and to maintain a sense of autonomy in their daily interactions with others in their ongoing lives.

Dealing with bereavement

Death of a loved one is likely to affect various aspects of the bereaved person's life, which he or she will need deal with in order to carry on with living. Furthermore, the aim of continuing daily life is not just to redefine relationships with the deceased, for it also involves recovering the sense of meaning to explain and justify ongoing life. The following analysis focuses on the reported bereavement experiences by considering how the bereaved people were shaped by their motivations in terms of 'redefining the relationship with the deceased' as well as 'recovering meanings in the continuing lives' in individualistic British society.

Redefining the relationship with the deceased

As a consequence of losing a loved one in life, bereaved people have to face the physical absence of the deceased regardless of how strong the relationship with him or her that had been developed. As a result, in the flow of ongoing lives, they often have to adjust the relationship with the deceased to the changed reality integrating this changing relationship into their ongoing lives (Klass, Silverman et al., 1996; Riches, 2000; Valentine, 2010; 2013). As discussed earlier, in Britain, the relationship between the bereaved person and the deceased often developed with the strong sense of intimacy and independence prior to death. In the following, the accounts are interpreted according to how the bereaved person tried to redefine such a relationship in the individualised and secularised British society.

Relationships in funeral

As a social transition often immediately following death, the funeral had been predominantly reconstructed in the interviews as an initial stage of understanding and justifying the changing relationships in the bereaved person's social life. As mentioned in the discussion on the secularisation in Britain at the beginning of this chapter, the funeral is no longer dominated by religion, but rather, shows a great diversity in terms of how bereaved people process a funeral by highlighting the agency of the deceased as well as themselves. As described in most interviews, the funeral was a hard time due to the direct confrontation with the death and the absence of the deceased:

> *… that's the hardest bit for me when they start the rollers and the coffin goes and the curtains go and I think that's it – that's the final moment and that's the hardest bit – that's you know the most difficult part of the whole process. (Brain)*

However, a few people found the funeral more functionally positive by perceiving it as a purposive ritual of visualising and making sense of death:

> *I mean the ritual served a purpose in itself – it was a full stop at the end of a sentence, so the ritual was useful. (Brian)*

As an important ritual and transition, a funeral was reported to offer the bereaved person opportunities to maintain or recover the individuality and autonomy of the deceased and the him or her. In some cases, the bereaved person tried to claim their authority in the preparation of the funeral by emphasising the agency of the deceased:

> *We had this guy turn up – a funeral director and he was late, he wasn't very good, he didn't know what he was doing, um, I'd nipped out of the room… And he really started to irritate me and I said to my dad 'I'm not happy' and he said 'no neither am I pet'. I said to him 'I'd like you to leave'. And I chucked him out and the funny part was I can see my mum – my mum's five foot two, but of anybody my mum would have shown him the door. And I partly did it for her, thinking you're not dealing with my mum… (Tania)*

Further, the funeral itself had been highly personalised in a sense of maintaining the identity and agency of the deceased:

> *We had the Bohemian Rhapsody for the in and out – he was a Queen fan – we personalised it. (Elisabeth)*

Moreover, a personalised funeral was also a means of exercising the bereaved person's agency, being also likely to provide him or her a sense of empowerment and justification his or her experience:

> *I read a poem and things like that – my sister read a bit from the bible – so it was nice – it was as nice, as we could make anything like that. (Lynn)*

Apart from empowering both the deceased and the bereaved person, the funeral as a social event could also enable the latter to face his or her loss with a strong sense of being supported by others:

> *… it was just full of people behind you know they couldn't all get in the church. It was amazing. Mainly friends. (Elisabeth)*

Sometimes, the presence of others at the funeral could also reshape the bereaved person's understanding of the identity of the deceased through engaging with him or her:

> *I think his funeral taught me more about how he'd – affected so many lives – so his funeral taught me how much he cared about other people.....having so many people come up and say that he'd really touched their lives, that was nice. (Patrick)*

Furthermore, in some accounts, the bereaved person reconstructed the funeral as a social transition with a strong and interactive presence of the deceased:

> *And I've no doubt that she was watching her own funeral and from that point of view. she knows how much I loved her and felt for her, 'cos just by the way I acted at the funeral – it was completely natural... (Brian)*

Through the different pictures reconstructed above, the funeral could provide the bereaved person with the chance to rethink the identity of the deceased and the relationship between the two parties. As shown above, the bereaved person usually strove to maintain intimacy with the deceased, as well as reshaping an interactive relationship with a strong sense of agency and individuality for both.

Continuing bonds in ongoing lives

As studies have shown, bereavement does not only involve transitional rituals, such as the funerals, for it also affects bereaved people's ongoing lives (Marris, 1974; Valentine, 2007a). In many cases, this includes reconstructing the relationship with the deceased and integrating it to their everyday lives. As introduced in chapter 1, many empirical studies from different cultures have demonstrated how continuing bonds can shape bereaved people's ongoing lives (Howarth, 2007; Klass, Silverman et al., 1996; Valentine, 2007a; 2013; 2018). In the interviews, people reported how the internal presence of and the relationship with the deceased had shaped and was shaped by their daily interactions within specific social contexts. Whilst the majority of interviewees reconstructed positive relationships with the deceased, a few of them reported how

that person had had a negative impact on their lives owing to the poor relationship developed with him or her prior to death. Furthermore, in relation to motivation, most of the bereaved people's narratives show how adjusting their relationship with the deceased was a strong motivating force in their ongoing lives. This is reflected in the discussion below relating to the 'diverse presence of the deceased', 'justification', 'continuing relationships as being double-edged' and 'continuing bonds as part of life'.

First, as evidenced in many of the interviews, the bereaved people reported strong bonds with the deceased by creating a presence of him or her, which happened in diverse ways. For example, photos could be a strong and visual platform to facilitate connections with the deceased:

> *I think we've got a sort of connection to him - his spirit is perpetuated in the photos taken by his girlfriend… the ones that [his girlfriend] took, so capture the essence of the man, you know that smile and that mischievous look and every time I look at one of her pictures, you can feel him. (Mike)*

The connections were not only facilitated and maintained by material objects linked to the deceased, such as photos or personal belongings, but could be also experienced as a vivid and active presence of him or her in various aspects of the bereaved person's daily life:

> *I still think about her a lot. She will always, you know, she would always be a very important part of my life and I still do things and think, 'oh what would mum think of this'. (Lynn)*

Sometimes, a strong sense of the presence of the deceased could be interpreted by the bereaved person as a physical experience:

> *I tell you what, I did experience one night was and I'll swear it was him – there was one night when I felt a tap on my shoulder. (Elisabeth)*

Furthermore, the presence of the deceased could also be given agency, which could enable interaction between the two parties and further to shape the bereaved person's ongoing life:

I would sort of, you know, have a conversation with him, something like, you know, you're wondering if you're gonna complete this bloody thing and so you go and sit there, you know and say, if you're up there could you give me a bit of a hand. (Stephen)

As shown above, a bereaved person in Britain may maintain connections with the deceased in the form of a strong presence in different parts of their lives. Furthermore, in the ongoing relationship with the deceased, the bereaved interviewees sought to preserve and restore the deceased person's agency in order to retain a close and interactive relationship with him or her.

Second, due to the physical absence of the deceased, many interviewees often had to seek justification **f**or the ongoing relationships. For example, some of them had ambivalent feelings about such relationships with the deceased who was physically absent:

… on the one hand, you know you get on with your life and say 'right, you know he's dead, he's gone, he's not coming back', um, but at the same time, there are very subtle ways in which, psychological ways in which you try and still think that you are having a relationship with the person. Um, but at the same time you know your head thinks that's stupid, because they're dead. (Stephen)

Hence, the bereaved person felt obliged to explain and justify their experiences of continuing bonds by drawing on available discourses from the broader structures. Furthermore, as introduced above, living in a multi-cultural society, people in Britain are likely to be tolerant with different values and norms shared by different social groups,; therefore and thus, the bereaved are more likely to adopt broader discourses to construct ongoing relationships so as to reflect their personal values and preference (Valentine, 2013; 2018). As a result, the bereaved interviewees aimed to construct a more personal and accessible idea of the relationship with the deceased, not only for themselves, but also other people. For example, religion, as a traditional and still influential social language, could be adopted by some interviewees as a means of understanding and justifying the deceased's continuing presence:

> *I mean in terms of spiritual being, the right words I do struggle a lot with – I mean when things like this happen, um, I mean it's nice to have tools to be able to deal with it and I think, you know, religion can give you the tools. (Adrian)*

However, given strong British secularisation, the bereaved person might question the authority of well-structured and widely practised religions, which have long been promoting ideas of the afterlife and a spiritual realm. As a result, the person would develop an ambivalent attitude to formalised religion:

> *I don't know I think if there's a god, as suggested by the bible, then I think he's pretty fucked up. But I would say that if there's a god that's not like the god of the bible then – in terms of Christianity, the only way I can understand Christianity is through metaphor and at least modern day druidism is more honest in its use of metaphor – and you know I think it lacks a lot of things – and Christianity is certainly – can only be understood through the form of metaphor – and you know that is quite good really, but you have to realise that it's stories. (Brian)*

Instead, the bereaved person could develop ideas from non-religious beliefs to create a more personalised sense of supernaturalism and spirituality for the sake of justifying their ongoing relationship with the deceased:

> *I mean I'm not religious, I don't go to church and I don't believe in religion, but I've got a lot of faith and I believe there's someone out there looking after me, um – I mean I think faith's what you have inside and it's where you go to the next level… I still know that she's there watching me quietly, you know, 'cos I don't know – I do believe that there are spirits. (Brian)*

In so doing, they sought to make sense of the deceased being physically absent, while still experiencing a sense of their presence.

Third, continuing relationships with the deceased were not necessarily positive for the bereaved person's ongoing life, but rather, these could be double edged or even obstructive. By facing the physical absence of a loved one, a continuing bond could include a sense of being wounded through the discrepancy between the internal world of the continuing bond and the physical reality of absence:

> *There's certain bits of you, which they never actually quite heal over and obviously a lot of that is not going to heal over. (Lynn)*

Sometimes, the sense of being wounded could be perceived as losing part of oneself:

> *Another thing I do feel is I've lost my other half – a part of me. (Tania)*

Furthermore, depending on the relationship before death, the connection with the deceased could sometimes be resisted by the bereaved person:

> *… I wouldn't like to become like my Grandpa, because he was stubborn till the bitter end. But my Grandfather was very selfish and it's personality traits that endure... So, you know that if you've got a leaning towards being very stubborn there's that. So, whenever I'm being selfish or pig-headed, or whatever it is I think about, them. (Sarah)*

As shown here, what were perceived as negative characteristics of the deceased while they were alive could serve as reminders to resist those characteristics and related behaviour in oneself. Following the death of her grandfather, Sarah, in the above quote, was motivated to resist certain characteristics she shared with the deceased and which her ongoing relationship with him served to remind her of.

Fourth, apart from a few interviewees who claimed some painful or negative ongoing relationships with the deceased, the majority showed a strong tendency to integrate an continuous and interactive relationship into their everyday lives as part of their sense of themselves:

> *I strongly believe that she's left enough of herself for me to carry forward and that is my strength… I kind of feel she's more part of me now – it's more the this is what I'm doing mum that sort of thing. It's sort of a – I'll often talk to her. (Tania)*

To summarise, intimate and positive relationships with the deceased developed before death could profoundly shape the bereaved person's everyday life as well as their sense of self. As mentioned above, such relationships developed before death could be taken-for-granted as part of the bereaved person's life. Hence, as demonstrated by the above extracts, the bereaved person was motivated to recover and maintain intimate and interactive relationships by using available social discourses in personalised ways to construct and justify continuing bonds with the deceased. Furthermore, when considering these continuing relationships in the British context, whilst they remained intimate, both parties retained a strong sense of agency and independence in the relationships. Meanwhile, the relationships were often integrated into the bereaved person's own identity to contribute to recovering or enhancing their sense of a autonomous and independent self. As will be discussed in the following chapters, the identity conveyed from the British interviews have been individual-based compared with what can be found from the narratives from the more relational societies of Japan and China. However, the British interviewees' sense of themselves are also largely relational. That is to say, they were motivated to seek their autonomy from redefining relationships with the deceased.

Recovering meaning in ongoing lives

As discussed above, the relationship with the deceased prior to his or her death played a considerable part in the bereaved person's everyday life, but redefining this was not the only task in bereavement. For, the bereaved person also sought to recover a sense of meaning for their ongoing life that had been undermined by loss. In this section, I explore how the bereaved person could seek meaning for their ongoing life as a whole and how the sense of recovering meaning could motivate them to negotiate with others and broader structures in their everyday lives. This

is achieved by looking at three different sources of support: 'self-support', 'family support' and 'social support'.

Self-support

As aforementioned, in an individualistic society emphasising individual ability and values, people tend to develop a strong sense of autonomy and independence. When facing the death of someone close, bereaved people from the sample often reported how they supported themselves in different ways by drawing on their own resources to deal with the issues and further to carry on their life:

> *I just put everything into work – you know I was working 6 or 7 days a week and doing 10 – 14 hour shifts you know – I mean. Trying to be positive though… Yeah, so life still goes on. (Elisabeth)*

As shown here, this bereaved person did not just attempt to stabilise her economic situation, for she also strove to develop emotional strength in herself.

Furthermore, in losing a loved one, most interviewees reported their emotional disruption in having to face and make sense of death, changing relationships with the deceased as well as finding meaning for their ongoing lives. As will be shown later, as a social being, the interviewees were likely to deal with their bereavement through seeking support from others ,as well as, drawing on and personalising discourses from the broader structures. However, as shown in the interviews, some bereaved people managed to develop inter-strengthen by highlighting their own autonomy and individual agency:

> *I accept that different people grieve in different ways and them being happy and joking was their way of getting over it and I hadn't reached that stage yet… because I've been through so much in my life, I don't feel anyone's got the right to tell me how I feel and who I am, because emotionally through my life I've been through more than most people. (Brian)*

Finding emotional strength could be achieved through understanding that death is part of life:

You can't go through life and not realise that death is a part of that – or you're going to be in pieces each time someone dies – and people die quite a lot. (Sarah)

Hence, supporting oneself in bereavement could include drawing on one's resources to deal with not only financial difficulties, but also emotional disruption. In so doing, these bereaved interviewees were likely to emanate a sense of self-responsibility and autonomy, which is strongly emphasised in British culture.

Family support

Apart from the self-resources, family was also reported as a significant source for seeking meaning from for the ongoing life. In the individualistic society where values and norms are shared in smaller groups, as shown in the accounts, family is often considered as an important institute, whereby individuals can share values with other members and make meaning from them. That is, bereaved people often seek to recover meaning for their lives from interacting with their family in terms of providing and receiving support.

Following on from the discussion on the self-support above, concerns about other family members could motivate the bereaved person to avoid focussing on themselves:

I've got three – four children, three grandchildren, I can't do this I can't do that, I've got to do it this way I can't let them see how much I'm hurting, because then they'll get upset and I'll make it worse for them. (Elisabeth)

As a member of a family, the bereaved person in the interviews often considered him/herself as being responsible for maintaining the family structure and recovering family values. That is, the sense of valuing family could strongly motivate the bereaved person to redefine meaning for life by supporting other kin in the ongoing life:

I suppose I see life from a different point of view, in that I see it now from being one person as opposed to two, um, you try and be more for the children. (Elisabeth)

Furthermore, interactions with family members could also provide a sense of meaning to the bereaved person for the ongoing life:

> *I mean, I still play badminton and my son plays badminton, so we still have friends from then as well – and it's made me. (Elisabeth)*

Moreover, new additions to the family were found to enable the bereaved person to see a bigger picture of meaning for ongoing life:

> *… about three months after mum died, my little grandson was born and I think that's helped – a new life and a new role… it's a cycle and someone's born and people die and we're all part of that cycle and we're all gonna snuff it and we're all gonna get older and die and we'll be replaced and that's part of… the new life being part of the cycle – something larger. (Lynn)*

As shown in the extracts above, family plays an important role of being a source for the bereaved person to recover meaning for the continuing life. It is the institution that most bereaved have stronger and more fixed relationships with when compared with other social groups. Hence, when facing the loss of a family member, the priority of family values could strongly shape the bereaved person's motivation in bereavement in relation to the sense of meaning for the ongoing life:

> *… you know my family come first every time. (Adrian)*

Social support

As part of diverse social networks, the bereaved person is also likely to seek support from the broader society beyond him/herself and family. In having different roles in society, the bereaved person is able to access different sources of social support. The interviewees reported a diversity of support, not only from their immediate ties, such as, friends and at the workplace, but also from broader networks, such as, counselling services and self-help groups.

Friendship was considered as an important source for obtaining emotional support for the bereaved:

> *… various people, um, friends of mine sort of invited me round to sort of cheer me up and like sort of keep my spirits up. (Stephen)*

In particular, if the death was difficult one, friends who were understanding and supportive could help the bereaved person find the strength to face life again:

> *… we've got friends who are a life-line – they're just amazingly understanding. (Mike)*

In addition, if the bereaved person was employed, the workplace could create a supportive atmosphere through the care and understanding of colleagues:

> *… one of the members of staff – she was brilliant and she did a really good job and um, it was great…I remember one of the mature students came and said I'm very sorry to hear about your mum – my mum died about six years ago and she was really nice – and I still talk to her every day and that was the sort of thing – you got very kind comments like that – people were very nice. (Lynn)*

Sometimes, the experience of being supported can lead to the bereaved person empathising with others in the same position and being able to give succour to them in the work environment:

> *… One of the members of staff came in you know and she said she'd come to say that her mother had just died and she'd had counselling and all the rest of it and I mean you know, you're there, you've been there, you know how they feel... I mean if somebody comes in and says their mother or father has died, you can feel something in here – you're not just saying oh so sorry. (Lynn)*

Apart from the support from the immediate social circles, the interviewees also reported their experience of seeking support from the broader society. As mentioned previously, a bereaved person living in Britain might well have less support from their social circles owing to the individualised life style and declining roles of traditions (Walter, 1994). As a result, he or she will

often seek support from more impersonal resources. For example, Eleanor who lost her son due to drug usage highlighted how sharing experiences in a self-help group enabled her to face the absence of her son and make sense of her life:

> *… I got in touch with Compassionate Friends at the beginning and I've spent quite a bit of time on their forum, I occasionally post, I read more than I post. I think what I've learnt is that, actually in the end, however your child dies, a lot of the feelings are pretty much the same. Children who die by suicide, I think they have the hardest time, because of the guilt, the unbelievable guilt that goes with that. But in the end, whether your child dies of cancer, or a car crash of drugs, actually [laughs] you're still adjusting to the absence and the not there-ness and the never again-ness [crying] of your child and that's awful … But [bereavement group leader] has been wonderful and a great help and I've been to the group a couple of times. (Eleanor)*

The self-help groups in Britain tend to target bereaved people who share the same types of death, gender or ethnic background (Walter, 2007). As shown above, the bereaved interviewee saw self-help groups as a platform for sharing experiences and seeking understandings from others as a means of making sense of loss and thus, be able to move on with her ongoing life

Summary: dealing with bereavement to carry on living

Many of the bereaved people in the interviews showed their motivation in relation to redefining the ongoing relationships with the deceased as well as restoring meaning for ongoing lives. In facing the physical absence of the deceased, many of them sought to reconstruct an intimate and continuous relationship with the deceased, in which the individuality and agency of that person were emphasised. Moreover, such a relationship was likely to be integrated into part of the bereaved person's own identity to reconstruct his or her strong sense of autonomy and individuality. Meanwhile, in relation to the recovery in daily life, the bereaved person was likely to receive support from as well as provide it to diverse others. Whilst self-support remained the main type, reflecting the cultural emphasis on self-reliance, family was also a significant source,

where the bereaved people could seek meaning for their ongoing lives. Furthermore, society also provided a diversity of support sources, even though these often had limited impact on the bereaved person's meaning recovery, in contrast to the self and family support.

As shown above, dealing with bereavement was a process of recovering the taken-for-granted life built by the bereaved person prior to the death, including redefining relationships with the deceased and recovering meaning for everyday life. As highlighted by Stroebe and Schut in their dual process model (1999), bereavement can be considered a mixed experience oscillating between both 'loss' and 'restoration' orientation. Accordingly, the experiences involved in bereavement by the focal interviewees were shaped by the dual purposes of dealing with loss and carrying on lives with a strong sense of individuality and autonomy.

3. Conclusion

As shown from the interviews from Britain, the interviewee reported their diverse ways of dealing with the loss of their loved one. Based on their accounts, we could see how a strong sense of autonomy and individuality had been developed and reshaped in their ongoing lives through interactions with others, including their loved one as well as other people, mainly including family members. By taking a chronological order for the analysis, the chapter has shed light on the bereaved person's experiences of before, at and after death of their loved one, with an overriding interest in motivation.

Living in an individualistic society, the interviewees in Britain had developed an intimate and independent relationship with their loved one before loss, largely contributing to a strong sense of autonomy and independence in their everyday lives. However, the experiences of losing the loved one was often associated with the physical suffering and deteriorating body functions; as a result, these bereaved people reported their distress and frustration regarding the dying person's declining autonomy and his/her growing dependence to the bereaved and others. Following their loss, as conveyed in the interviews, the bereaved people had largely relied on themselves by drawing own diverse discourses available in society in a personalised way. In so

doing, they were intended to maintain intimate and independent relationship with the deceased as well as to recover their autonomy and interdependence. Furthermore, these bereaved people could redefine themselves as a confident, capable and self-determined individual by providing and receiving support from family members. As such, the bereaved people in Britain were likely to interact with others in their ongoing lives; in so doing, they were motivated to maintain the strong sense of autonomy by developing intimate but relatively independent relationships with the deceased as well as others.

Chapter 5

Motivation in bereavement in Japan

Introduction

In this chapter, a sample of interviews with Japanese bereaved people is analysed by probing their accounts of their bereavement with reference to experiences before death, at the death and after death, with a focus on their motivation as a socially constructed tool for making sense of their loss and their ongoing lives by negotiating with their culture and society. Since Japan is culturally distinct from Britain, the discussion highlights how diverse values related to traditional and modern norms as well as eastern and western ideologies shaped bereaved people's everyday experience in Japan in constructing and reconstructing their sense of meaning. In making sense of the death of a loved one, Japanese people have been found to interweave collective and individualistic norms, either combining/adapting these or negotiating competing norms to justify their own experience (Maruyama, 2004; Valentine, 2009a, 2010, 2017, 2018). Based on the interviews, the aim of this chapter is to capture a socio-cultural perspective of bereavement through the reported experiences of individuals, with reference to the sociological notion of motivation.

1. Background: Bereavement in contemporary Japan

Despite Japan having been often considered as a more collective and relational society compared with many western countries, it has experienced a long process of modernisation in the form of a complex interplay between absorbing western values, while still valuing its own traditions (Askew, 2004; Tominaga, 1991). As an eastern society, Japan has developed a strong sense of social conformity and harmonious interdependence, which has been deeply embedded in Japanese people's everyday lives (Valentine, 2009a). In their individual lives, they are likely to comply with social pressures from a sense of a relational being by 'recognizing that one's

behaviour is determined, contingent on, and, to a large extent organized by what the actor perceives to be the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others in the relationship' (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). However, the Japanese sense of identity is by no means only determined by the cultural emphases on interdependence and relatedness to others. Rather, living in a highly industrialised and post-modern society, Japanese people also show a high degree of individual agency in relation to their own values and preferences (Tanaka, 2015; Valentine, 2018). Hence, the self in Japanese culture tends to be defined in a mixed sense of social conformity and individuality in seeking a balance between their social and individual lives (Lebra, 1994).

In relation to bereavement, such a sense of self can profoundly shape Japanese people's everyday experiences of confronting the death of a loved one. Japanese society has long established highly elaborated and formalised systems, including rich and mixed discourses of how bereavement should be handled, of processing individual deaths and redefining the relationships between the deceased and the survivors (Suzuki, 2002; Valentine, 2009a; 2010). It has been well documented that traditional resources of family values, ancestor veneration and spirituality still largely shape bereaved people's ongoing lives (Maruyama, 2004; Smith, 1974; Suzuki, 2002; Valentine, 2009a; 2010). As highlighted in many studies, the ancestral tradition has long been centred on beliefs and practices relating to the loss of a family member, strongly reflecting continuity of responsibilities and interdependence of ties among family members (Smith, 1974; Valentine, 2010). Furthermore, the sense of connection with ancestral figures is strongly associated with Japanese people's spirituality and religious beliefs (Smith, 1974). As mentioned in the previous chapter, religion is one of many social discourses in secularised western societies (Seale, 1998). However, in Japan, religious and/or spiritual beliefs are still an important aspect of people's lives, providing reference points for understanding their experiences (Hayashi, 2008; Maruyama, 2004). Therefore, the rich cultural scripts of religious rites and spirituality can strongly shape Japanese people's bereavement experiences in making sense of death, preserving continuing relationships with the deceased and adjusting to ongoing lives without him or her (Klass, Silverman et al., 1996; Valentine, 2009a; 2010; 2013).

These well-established traditions of dying, death and bereavement in Japan could also restrict bereaved people's agency in relation to their personal feelings and individual values (Valentine, 2009c, 2018). When facing expectations from family and the broader society, bereaved people in Japan often hold an 'ambivalence' towards the strong influence of traditions (Valentine, 2009c). Living in a society where individuals are more likely to be confirmed and valued through their relationships with others, Japanese bereaved people may follow cultural expectations, rather than prioritising their own wishes, which undermines their agency and experiences in bereavement. However, studies have also shown that Japanese people may revise and adapt pre-existing norms to serve their personal priorities, thus redefining bereavement in Japan within a more diverse picture (Long, 2004; Valentine, 2009a; Valentine, 2009c).

2. The Japanese experience of bereavement

In order to capture the diverse picture of bereavement in Japan, I analysed the data from the sample of 16 interviews conducted in 2007-2008 in Tokyo, Japan (Valentine, 2010) (see Chapter 3). These individual accounts can shed light on the dynamic and diverse relationships between socio-cultural discourses and individual experiences of bereavement. As conveyed from these interviewees, bereaved people negotiate competing discourses from Japanese society in order to make sense of and deal with the death of a loved one and continue their lives. Furthermore, whilst focusing on motivation, I analyse their reported experiences chronologically in the order of 'before death', 'at the death' and 'after death'. In so doing, I aim to shed light on how motivation shaped these Japanese bereaved people's ongoing lives in relation to how their sense of meaning was constructed, challenged and further recovered in their ongoing lives.

2.1 Before death

As discussed in previous chapters, fond relationships developed between the bereaved person and the deceased prior to death can be a significant part of people's bereavement experiences. As an intimate person in the bereaved person's everyday life, the deceased could contribute to how the bereaved person makes sense of their life experiences and to their sense of identity

before loss (Parkes, 1988; Schutz, 1974). When confronting the death of someone close, the bereaved person is often faced with how to adapt and reconstruct the once taken-for-granted relationships into a changed reality without the physical presence of the deceased. As shown from the Japanese interviews, the inter-personal relationships before death were largely based on reciprocity and responsibilities between the bereaved person and the deceased. By developing a sense of a relational being, the interviewees not only reported intimate interactions in different aspects of life with the deceased, but also conveyed a strong concern with responsibilities to/from him or her. In order to capture the diverse picture of intimate and reciprocal relationships from individual accounts, I go on to consider how the bereaved interviewees recalled their 'intimate relationships' as well as 'distant relationships' with the deceased.

Intimate relationships

The majority of the interviewees recollected positive memories of the deceased before he or she died, and how the person had played an important role in the bereaved person's day-to-day experience:

> *… we (my husband and I) had a very good relationship and he was indispensable to me - that's true. (Takara)*

They reported how these intimate relationships were often developed from frequent and deep interactions between the bereaved and the deceased prior to the death. As shown in the accounts, the bereaved person was likely to develop fond relationships, if the deceased was experienced as caring, understanding and supportive:

> *… he (my husband) was a very kind and generous person and he really looked after me and adored me. (Rin)*

The bereaved person also conveyed how they had contributed to the relationship by providing support to the deceased in everyday life before death:

… because my elder brother and sister got married and left the home, so it was just me and my mother living together. So, my mother used to run the family business and I was working as a Japanese teacher, but I was also supporting my mother. (Arisu)

Through mutual support from both parties, positive relationships could also be defined as being 'cooperative':

Anyway, we had a lot of things to do - we moved house at that time, as well as rebuilding the house we were living in and I helped him with his three children and we had a very co-operative relationship. (Mieka)

Furthermore, as mentioned above, Japanese people tend to define themselves and discover meaning in conformity to others. Hence, when developing relationships with others, they are likely to emphasise the needs of others rather than themselves and in so doing, they aim to obtain positive reactions from others as confirmation of their own identity (Tsuji, 2005; Valentine, 2018). In the interviews, some bereaved people did report how giving priority to others rather than one's self could contribute to positive relationships. From the perspective of the deceased, some interviewees highlighted the thoughtfulness of the deceased, which was reported as having been helpful:

Eventually it was getting worse and worse, but she took the whole thing very positively – she would always be thinking of the next step – so that helped me – her positive attitude. (Izanagi)

From the perspective of the bereaved person, positive relationships with the deceased could be defined as being responsible for that person rather than themselves. For example, one sister was concerned about her suicidal brother even though she was also in 'crisis':

But I felt quite a strong sense of crisis, and even though I'd only just had my own operation and was physically in quite a weak state, I thought what can I do in my condition? But I'd read a book about how to prevent suicides and

how you can tell if people are in a state of feeling suicidal - they start spending lots of money, or having affairs and that's exactly what he did. (Mieka)

As discussed above, the interviewees conveyed a vivid picture of positive relationships based on mutual support between the bereaved person and the deceased before death. Mutuality included not only exchanging support in different aspects in life, but also an emphasis being placed on the needs of others rather than oneself.

Distant relationships

Whilst the Japanese interviewees predominantly reported their relationship with the deceased as intimate, a few people also reported conflicts and distance with the deceased. As mentioned above, intimate relationships were likely to be developed through the deceased person prioritising supporting the bereaved person, whereas distant relationships might derive from the deceased person's prioritising others over the bereaved person. For example, one son expressed his sadness and disappointment at his mother concerns with social conformity, rather than his own health:

I was very saddened, because I felt she was more concerned about appearances than she was about my health… She didn't want me to go to the fitness club during the day, because people at the fitness club might ask what am I doing there during the day in the week. And don't come round to see me in the day. And I understood that she wasn't normal. (Kioshi)

As shown above, the bereaved son placed a high expectation to his mother, who was believed to have obligations to provide care and support to and even prioritise the needs of himself, reflecting a strong sense of interdependence based on sharing support and responsibilities. In addition, relationships could be affected by physical and emotional distance from the deceased before death:

Because we (my husband and I) lived together for such a short time it just felt like I went back to living how I was living before… he's there but him being

there doesn't affect my behaviour…. Not much change actually... Life itself hasn't really changed. (Noriko)

In the account, the bereaved person highlighted how the nature of relationships was strongly affected by the quantity and quality of daily interactions. That is, it would appear that reciprocity between the two parties before death could reduce disruption to the bereaved person's everyday life after it.

As discussed above, whilst some interviewees experienced conflict and distance with the deceased before death, the relationships between the two parties were by no means one dimensional, but rather, the interviewees tended to reconstruct these in a sense of a mixture of both intimacy and distance (Davies, 2017 #3):

I used to have a lot of arguments with my father and so I had a better understanding of him, because we argued a lot and actually I developed a very good relationship with him and when he got hospitalised with the liver problem I consciously tried to make an effort to be with him and to make up… (Akiko)

Summary: reciprocal and others-centred relationships

The relationships reconstructed in the interviews not only provide an understanding of the individual lives of these bereaved people before losing their loved one, for they also reflect a broader picture of how their identity could be shaped by available socio-cultural scripts. By developing relationships based on the mutual support and giving priority to others, the bereaved person would tend to define themselves as a relational being, which was profoundly confirmed and valued by the interactions with the deceased before death. Furthermore, the majority of these Japanese interviewees showed the bereaved person's determination to seek conformity with the cultural hegemony of interpersonal harmony, gratitude and loyalty through committing to such reciprocal and other-centred relationships with the deceased (Tsuji, 2005; Valentine,

2009a). As such, the relationships could have strong and continuous impact on the bereaved person ongoing lives not only before death, but also during and after it.

2.2 At dying and death

Losing a loved one is inevitably challenging and disruptive to bereaved people's daily routines as well as their identities (Davies, 2017; Valentine, 2009a). In the Japanese context, the dying and death of a loved one were reported to challenge the bereaved person's interdependent relationships with the deceased as well as their own sense as a relational being on a day-to-day basis. Furthermore, living in a post-modern and non-western society, in recalling their experiences, interviewees drew on a variety of discourses relating to both social hegemony and individual needs. In this section, the reported accounts of dying and death are explored to ascertain how these Japanese bereaved people negotiated a dying process and how they tried to make sense of death from competing discourses in their society. The discussion follows two themes: 'negotiating a dying process' and 'making sense of death'.

Negotiating the dying process

The experience of a loved one dying can bring various changes and threats to taken-for-granted life routines and meaning systems that once were shaped by the relationship between the bereaved person and the deceased before death (Long, 2004; Unruh, 1983; Valentine, 2009a). According to the interviews, the dying process in Japan could strongly reflect a diverse picture of the 'dying trajectory' (Glaser and Strauss, 1965; Saunders, 1970), showing competing discourses between medicalisation and traditional beliefs about dying as a smooth transition, individualism and relatedness. As will be seen in this section, a prolonged dying process could not just undermine the dying person's well-being, but also led to the questioning of the life and identity of the bereaved person. In facing such challenges, these bereaved individuals attempted to negotiate their loved one's dying through various commitments. In so doing, they were motivated to recover their sense of meaning through a mixture of traditional and individual

values. In order to capture such a dynamic process of dying, the themes of 'confronting difficulties in dying' and 'justifying a difficult dying' are used.

Confronting difficulties in dying

As a post-industrial society, Japan has developed high standards of medical care for its citizens (Long, 2004; Valentine, 2009a). Accordingly, when reporting their experiences of their loved one's dying, a highly medicalised context was apparent in most of the interviews. Similar to the impact of medicalisation in Britain, medical knowledge and intervention were also likely to bring the bereaved person shock and distress. For example, a father's sense of meaning was totally paralysed, as he used the phrase 'black and life', after being exposed to the harsh reality of his son's diagnosis:

> *I was told all of a sudden that my son had leukaemia by the doctor - and at that point the doctor told me that the chances of my son surviving for five years was less than 15% and when I heard that it was as though my world changed from being colourful to being black and white. (Harui)*

In such medicalised settings, interviewees highlighted their distressing memories of their loved one's physical and emotional sufferings when approaching death. As mentioned by many interviewees, witnessing the physical sufferings of a loved one could be an extremely difficult experience:

> *… my mother suffered a lot when she was fighting the cancer and the medication didn't work, so she was really suffering from the pain. So, looking at my mother's suffering, turning to fear, so whenever my mother appears in my dreams she is always suffering. So, that's very difficult. (Akiko)*

Meanwhile, the highly medicalised and often institutionalised environment could cause the dying person to experience emotional distress:

… my son was concerned he was very sensitive, especially to things that were happening in the hospital. And once a child who had been hospitalised in the room next door died and when that happened my son wanted to get out of the hospital and go home. (Harui)

When facing such suffering of their loved one as shown above, the bereaved person often felt obligated to look after the dying person, with sometimes the prolonged process leaving them extremely exhaust themselves:

Because I looked after my mother (for 7 years) until her death, my father asked me if I would do the same for him and at that time in Japan they didn't really have a concept of informed consent, so he wasn't informed of his condition, but I knew it was terminal cancer and so I felt really heavy - oh my god I have to do that experience again. (Akiko)

However, the sense of mutual responsibility with the deceased might also cause the bereaved person strong feelings of guilt for not being able to help the dying person:

I had a very strong guilty feeling about not being able to help her (my mother) and I have been struggling with that for 20 years. (Akiko)

In this section, the interviewees' accounts have shown the various difficulties faced by both the dying and the bereaved person. The dying process in Japan could be considered difficult due to the physical and emotional suffering caused by the dying person's health condition as well as the strong impact of medicalisation. The difficulties for the bereaved person were not only derived from witnessing the dying person's sufferings, for they also could be attributed to the sense of obligation to support the dying person. Hence, in order to deal with these difficulties, the bereaved person, as reported, also committed in diverse ways in order to justify the dying as having been a smooth process.

Justifying a difficult dying

Whilst interviewees reported disruptive and difficult experiences involved in the person's dying, these experiences were balanced with more positive aspects. Their accounts showed how they engaged with a range of discourses to reconstruct a smoother dying, reflecting a mixture of traditional and contemporary values available in society. As mentioned earlier, Japanese culture tends to emphasise reciprocal relationships with a strong sense of gratitude and responsibility, which are deeply incorporated into individuals' everyday lives. However, dying, often defined as difficult by the interviewees, could challenge or even overturn such harmonious relationships between the bereaved and the dying person. In reaction to these difficulties. as shown above, some bereaved people turned to religion and spirituality, which have long supported people in making sense of suffering and to pursue peace of mind, in order to reduce disruption and comfort the dying person:

> *… because the whole family had this religious belief, we said this sutra for mum and my father was holding her left hand and I was holding her right hand and we were reading this sutra and my mum - her lips were moving, but the blood pressure was going down and down, so I was warming my mum's hands reading this sutra hoping that she would get better. (Sakura)*

In addition to drawing on religious beliefs, some accounts also showed how the bereaved person had attempted to recover a sense of harmony and interdependence in interacting with others, including not only the dying person, but also other family members and sometimes professionals. When facing the distressing experiences of losing a loved one, many interviewees tended to highlight harmonious and cooperative relationships with others in order to make sense of the dying process. In terms of the relationships with the dying person, the bereaved person might try to create a more peaceful and harmonious environment by reducing possible disruption and enhancing the relationship with him or her. In a highly medicalised context, the bereaved person might feel that open disclosure to the dying person could undermine the harmonious atmosphere by bringing distress to him or her. Instead, some of them chose to conceal the prognosis in order to protect them as well as to maintain the sense of harmony and peace, even though it might undermine the agency of the dying person:

… we thought it was too much for him to bear, so we decided not to tell him the prognosis… because he thinks he's recovering at that point, then all of a sudden, he's got cancer again. So, we had to discuss about whether we should tell him or not. But it was such a harsh thing to tell him that he's got cancer when he thinks he's recovering and also that we've all been lying to him. (Yui)

Apart from protecting the dying person from possible disruption, the bereaved person could take pleasure in enhanced relationships with him or her through frequent interactions:

… because he was bored I visited him every day and we had plenty of conversation and so it may sound a little bit strange to say this, but I did enjoy those moments in the hospital ……so, because I really enjoyed it during those moments… (Takara)

In some cases, the bereaved person would rather sacrifice something important in their lives in order to gain more time to maintain and develop relationships with the dying person even though the decision was difficult to make:

When I found out my son had a leukaemia, I decided to reposition myself in my career. So, instead of staying in the position of journalist, I became a researcher for the research institute that the company had and by doing that, I could find more time to be with my son. And at the time that was probably not so common that both parents are taking care of the dying son until his death - so it was a new thing… (Harui)

In terms of the relationships with other people, some interviewees reported how positive experiences with family member and professionals could contribute to shaping a smoother process of dying. In Japan, since family is still a key social unit for support and meaning, the bereaved interviewees were likely to find reinforcement from supporting the dying person as part of a united family effort:

Though we did not win this fight, at least it gave us hope and a sense of sharing a common goal - our family had never felt so united. (Misaki)

Meanwhile, in a medicalised context, the bereaved person could reconstruct a smoother dying by recalling the sense of support from and gratitude towards medical professionals:

> *The doctors and nurses were very nice to us… I was filled with appreciation and gratitude to all those people around me… (Takara)*

Apart from conveying traditional values of harmony and interdependence, the interviews also reflected the more contemporary values of individuality and agency. As mentioned above, dying could profoundly undermine the dying person's daily routines and his or her relationships with others. In particular, the dying person might have to experience challenges to his or her individuality and/or sense of agency in the context of medicalisation. Hence, to counteract this situation, the bereaved person would find ways of protecting the personhood and dignity of the dying person:

> *I felt my role was one of shielding him against any abuses of his dignity and believe that people should respect those who are dying as full people until their last breath. I was also trying to keep his spirits up. (Misaki)*

Some interviewees were able to focus on the internal strengthen of the dying person to compensate for the loss of individuality:

> *… my wife's personality was very positive, so she viewed her condition very positively and although she had some fear about the whole thing, she didn't cry or anything – and it's not like an operation – more like a treatment. (Izanagi)*

Sometimes, supportive and understanding medical professionals could also enable the bereaved person to preserve the dignity and personhood of the dying person:

> *Actually, we really had good hospital staff, not only doctors and nurses, but the other staff too. I think they dealt with the death with dignity and respect and our doctor, he happened to be a Christian and he had known my mother for 8 years throughout her treatment and so he knew her quite well and he*

treated her body with respect and they didn't rush us out - they were very good. (Yui)

In addition to damaging the individuality of the dying person, the deteriorating body functions and increasing dependence during a prolonged process could also restrict him or her from exercising his or her own agency. For example, a dying mother's request to return home for her final days was refused by the hospital:

… she (my mother) actually wanted to go home, but the hospital wouldn't let her. (Arisu)

In responding to such frustration, a few bereaved people reported their determination to restore the dying person's agency by respecting his or her wishes. For example, the daughter in the above example decided to decorate the hospital room like their home in order to fulfil the last wish of her dying mother:

Three days before my mother passed away, I asked to have time off work and I stayed at the hospital for those three days and my role was to make the hospital feel like home. (Arisu)

Furthermore, in some cases, the bereaved person was prepared to prioritise the dying person's preference and agency at the expense of his or her physical comfort and well-being:

… they feel that if you use painkillers it's like you're giving in and so not until the very very end will they use painkillers. And it's their choice - we would have preferred for them to have an easier, less painful experience. But it was his choice and the doctors cannot go against that… But eventually we decided the doctor should tell him - and we knew he was going to be very disappointed about this, so we accompanied him to this meeting. (Yui)

In this section, the accounts cited above have presented a diverse picture of how the bereaved person in Japan can negotiate their loved one's dying. By referring to a mixture of traditional and postmodern values, the bereaved person tended to justify their loved one's dying. Some people sought to maintain or recover the sense of harmony and interdependence, whilst others were

more concerned with individuality and agency. Regardless of the diversity of responses, the negotiations were somehow motivated to adapt the intimate and reciprocal relationships, which had been long constructed between the bereaved and the dying person, to the ongoing process of dying.

Making sense of death

Given death is often associated with a sense of distress and disruption, Japanese people have developed diverse ways of understanding both their own and others' deaths. Death in Japan is often seen as a familiar part of people's everyday life, both historically and contemporarily, for a range of reasons, including a longstanding tradition of suicide[7] (Toyomasa, 1980), man-made disasters, such as wars and atomic bombs, as well as, natural calamities, such as earthquakes and tsunamis (Nitasha, 2015). As a result, Japanese society has developed rich rituals and beliefs related to death as a smooth social transition to reduce disruption and maintain solidary within the family and society (Smith, 1974). On the other hand, at an individual level, the death of a loved one is far more than a social/spiritual transition to ancesterhood in the afterlife, but rather, it is often associated with emotional distress, practical disruption and even social exclusion. When facing death as a distressing and disruptive event in life, some people seek support from traditions to make sense of it. In contrast, others may find little comfort from traditional norms in terms of managing their individual emotions and instead, they can turn to contemporary discourses to seek a more individualised way of perceiving the death. In this section, the accounts of death show how it could be shaped by traditional and contemporary values as well as how the bereaved person might draw on competing messages from Japanese society. As such, the discussion follows two themes: 'confronting a bad death' and 'justifying a good death'.

[7] Suicide has been long nurtured in Japanese society. Historically, an 'honourable death' by disembowelment, often referred as 'Seppuku' or 'Harakiri', was reserved for the Samurai class (military class) as means of showing their courage and loyalty to their masters, as well as, compensating for their mistakes and sins. Whilst 'Seppuku' suicides are rarely committed nowadays, the idea of seeing death as a means of solving problems still exists in Japan.

Confronting a bad death

The image of a bad death in Japan is strongly associated with traditional values of harmony, social conformity and interdependence, as well as, contemporary discourses of medicalisation and psychology. First, amongst the participants a bad death was often defined by suffering and upsetting experiences. As highlighted in some interviews, physical pain accompanying death could strongly contribute to a sense of badness:

> *It was difficult because she looked as though she was in pain - it wasn't as if she'd found peace - she had a very painful expression. (Momoka)*

As shown in the account above, such a suffering death had profoundly challenged the cultural expectation of death as a peaceful and harmonious transition. Further, the sense of badness could even be escalated by certain types of deaths, including those that were sudden, violent and/or untimely. Some Japanese interviewees reported how the sudden death of a loved one left them emotionally shocked and little prepared:

> *It was so sudden, I didn't know what was happening, as if it was a nightmare. Because we were told he was OK and were about to leave the hospital. (Nanami)*

If someone dies at an unexpected age, the death is likely to cause difficulties in making sense of for the bereaved person:

> *… he died of liver cancer at the age of 60, which I thought was too early. (Akiko)*

In addition, violent deaths were also strongly highlighted as bad death. For example, the suffering face of the deceased could strongly remind the bereaved person about the brutality of the death:

> *It was difficult, because she (my sister) looked as though she was in pain - it wasn't as if she'd found peace - she had a very painful expression. (Kioshi)*

Furthermore, the types of death mentioned above could be experienced as 'bad' in relation to spiritual beliefs about it in Japan and thus, dying without peace and harmony is believed to produce unsettled spirits. In particular, as reported by a few interviewees, suicide was highly likely to cause continuous suffering to the spirit, thus preventing the deceased from resting in peace:

> *The psychic healer said because she died by suicide her spirit wasn't really in somewhere like heaven. She was still at the place where she had died and the place was a place for suicide - others had - like several others had - and she was pulled by the spirit of those who had already died by suicide… (Momoka)*

Second, when a death is disruptive and contradictory to social expectations of a good death involving smoothness and harmony, the bereaved person might feel reluctant to share publicly the details, especially in a society where individual meaning is dependent on relationships with others. Regarding which, one bereaved sister hesitated to talk openly about her brother's suicide:

> *Also, the place I was living at the time, it was where I grew up, so everybody knew me and my family and so, the neighbours started to gossip about my brother dying - we didn't tell them anything about why he died. (Mieka)*

Further, due to the strong sense of interdependence, the bereaved person could experience stigma in relation to a suicide death:

> *… it was very shameful - and also it was very difficult to accept, so that's why we didn't tell other family members what had happened. (Kioshi)*

Third, apart from the disharmony and stigma involved in some deaths, the sense of badness could also be shaped by the advancement of medicalisation in contemporary Japanese society. As such, when the cause of death remained uncertain, as shown in some accounts, the bereaved person might find it difficult to make sense of and accept. At the same time, they often felt responsible for find a convincing answer for the death:

So, people say that's why she died. So, I think death is really difficult. The people who are left want to know why - and people still don't know why she died, because she was healthy. So, the doctor said it may be caused by stress so they try to find out who is to blame. But really, I can understand that kind of feeling, because we want to work it out and so, we try and find someone to blame. (Sumiko)

The difficulties might be further intensified by unsupportive medical professionals, who could make the death even more controversial and disruptive:

So, the hospital wanted to do an autopsy on the spot, but the hospital and his father had a bit of an argument, because the hospital could hide evidence and the fact that it was their mistake. So, the hospital suggested they call the police and make the case official, so that they wouldn't be sued afterwards. (Nanami)

In some extreme cases that involved sudden and violent deaths, such as suicides, the bereaved person was likely to find it hard to understand and justify:

… maybe deciding to commit suicide itself must have been very hard for her. So, um, it was very hard for me to think how she must have felt just before she died… (Momoka)

Therefore, instead of relying on traditional values and medical knowledge, they might try to draw on psychological knowledge to gain an insight into the uncertainties in death. However, a psychological explanation could bring further distress to themselves due to feelings of guilt:

… all her friends were attending the classes and graduating I think she felt lonely… Probably she was in that room by herself - and it was raining and probably she felt even more lonely...I think her self-esteem was very low … I feel so guilty because I didn't know any of this. (Momoka)

To summarise this section, the sense of badness was largely determined by the suffering, disruption and disharmony involved in death from physical, emotional and spiritual perspectives.

Meanwhile, a socially unacceptable dying and interdependence with the deceased might further intensify the badness by bringing stigma to the bereaved person. Additionally, considering the strong influence of medicalisation and psychology in society, death with uncertainty was also considered bad and might cause further disruption. As discussed, whilst the sense of badness of a death could be related to various factors, the bereaved people were more likely to find a death bad, if the harmonious and interdependent relationship with the deceased were challenged.

Justifying a good death

In contrast a bad death, as introduced above, Japanese traditional culture has constructed certain images of a good one by highlighting peacefulness, relatedness and familial solidarity (Valentine, 2009a). Meanwhile, more individualistic values and scientific ideas have also contributed to the diversity in how the good death is defined nowadays in Japan (Long, 2004; Valentine, 2010).

In the interviews, a good death was predominantly associated with a smooth transition with little suffering or disruption for the deceased. As mentioned above, dying could involve physical pain and emotional distress, which could not only cause difficult experiences for the dying person, but also undermine the bereaved person's emotional stability due to their reciprocity with the dying person. Hence, some interviewees could discover relief from seeing death as the end of suffering for the deceased:

> *… when he died I felt like everything was over - that I don't have to see him suffering anymore - that's how I felt… So, everybody was probably relieved that he was finally relieved from all the suffering. (Takara)*

When a death itself was peaceful, the bereaved person was likely to experience comfort and relief in having been able to help the deceased achieve a happy ending; showing interdependence and responsibility in the relationship:

> *I think she had a very happy way of dying. She died in peace. My mother had been repeating that she had a very happy life from time to time and so, I think she departed this world without any regret. It was a very sad moment, but I*

think we all felt that we had done what we could. So, there was no regret - maybe not zero regret, but I think we all acknowledged that we had done all we could for her. (Yui)

A sense of peacefulness and naturalness could also be found by the bereaved person, if the death was timely:

I could accept that fact, because they were old and we were ready for it. (Sumiko)

Furthermore, spiritual beliefs in an afterlife could be a good reference point to understanding a death as a smooth and spiritual transition to another world:

… he (my father) also said, well if I die I can go and join mum and I think that should be OK. So, it was kind of nice to see that he rather wanted to be with his loved one. So, I thought, well it's all good with you, but what about me, but then I thought - it was kind of relief to me that he kind of understood his destiny, so I think it was much easier for me to deal with, because he kind of accepted it. (Akiko)

From a familial perspective, the goodness of a death was reported in the interviews by highlighting family involvement and an enhanced familial solidarity:

I forgot to mention about my father's moment of death. All the family members were able to be with him at the very end and fortunately all the siblings were there to see my sister also. (Yui)

As evidence above, many of the bereaved interviewees in Japan largely drew on traditional values of harmony and interdependence to construct a good death of their loved one. However, they also found that the ideas of independence and individuality could contribute to making sense of their death. For example, on the one hand, a bereaved wife found relief from spending the last moment with her husband:

> *When he was still breathing, I was able to tell him what I wanted to – even though he was just lying there. I think he heard what I told him. So, I was able to tell him – I was holding his hand for nine hours and was able to tell him everything I wanted to and so I was quite calm. (Rin)*

On the other hand, for a bereaved husband, dying alone was an appropriate way of respecting his wife's personality, reflecting the more western value of individuality:

> *So, I wasn't with her when she actually died, but from her personality – she really cared about other people – and so dying on her own without other people watching probably – I didn't feel especially lonely about it –but I rather feel it suited her character. (Izanagi)*

As shown in these two contradictory accounts of the moment of death, Japanese bereaved people make sense of death in diverse ways in relation to a variety of competing discourses available in society.

Summary: ambivalence in making sense of dying and death

When recalling their lived experiences, the Japanese interviewees reported how they perceived the dying and death of their loved one and how they sought meaning from the experience by negotiating competing discourses related to the traditional collectivism and more contemporary individualism. A loved one's dying was likely to undermine the bereaved person's sense of interpersonal harmony and mutual responsibilities in relation to witnessing their suffering and feeling unable to help. Compared with the process of dying, death was likely to bring considerable and immediate challenges to the bereaved person's life. Sometimes, if a death was sudden, unexpected, violent and/or controversial, the bereaved person might have to face further challenges imposed from traditional understandings in terms of fears of an unsettled sprit and stigma from society. Meanwhile, whilst the badness of dying and death was largely defined through its violation of traditional values, contemporary discourses of individual agency, medicalisation and psychological knowledge provided an alternative reference point from which to understand the difficulties in dying and death.

In response to losing a loved one, as demonstrated above, the bereaved person was motivated to deal with the various difficulties above in order to recover their taken-for-granted meaning in life. In so doing, they showed diverse responses to the prolonged and often suffering dying by interweaving an emphasis on social relationships and the values of individuality. In coping with a bad death, the traditional values of peacefulness, familial and social solidarity played significant roles in meaning-making. Moreover, the emphasis on individuality could also be employed to make sense of the death, for example, leaving the person to die alone, according to his or her personality.

As evidenced above, the dying and death of a loved one in Japan can involve ambivalent experiences that could be shaped by a variety of norms, reflecting blurred boundaries between traditions and contemporary values in Japan. However, the accounts also conveyed how the bereaved person would tend to primarily maintain and recover the sense of interdependence and harmony, which resonated with the cultural emphasis on social conformity. Since losing a loved one could have an ongoing impact on the bereaved person, in the following section, how these bereaved Japanese interviewees were motivated to maintain and recover meaning in their lives, while also coping with the aftermath of the death, is explored.

2.3 After death

After having met the challenges of a loved one's dying and death, the Japanese interviewees were often faced with how to deal with further burdens in their ongoing lives. Living in a society that shares competing messages according both traditional and contemporary values, how the Japanese bereaved person faced bereavement and how they adjusted to their loss were shaped by their socio-cultural background (Valentine, 2013). As mentioned previously, the meaning developed from maintaining interdependence with the deceased and harmonious relationships with others, could be strongly challenged or even shattered by losing the person. These bereaved interviewees often coped with this situation by redefine the relationship with the deceased and others to recover the sense of meaning. In order to capture a picture of how they achieved this, I analyse the interviews to illustrate how the predominant sense of interdependence and social

harmony shaped bereaved people's ongoing experiences as well as how alternative meaning might be developed in the process.

Dealing with the impact of death

As demonstrated by the previous chapter on bereavement in Britain and other studies (Holst-Warhaft, 2000; Marris, 1974; Riches, 2000; Stroebe, 1987), the loss of someone close cannot just challenge bereaved people's emotional lives, for it can also impact on many other aspects. In the Japanese interviews, the bereaved people too reported how their lives had been affected by losing a person who they had developed interdependent relationships with in various aspects of their lives. The accounts predominantly pointed to impact on emotional, familial and social lives, showing how loss could shape their interdependence with the deceased and social relationships with others. In addition, the loss was also reported to shape other life aspects. Therefore, this section discusses 'emotional impact', 'family impact', 'social impact' and 'practical impact,' as covered in the following.

Emotional impact

Loss of a loved one was often associated with emotional challenges and changes in the bereaved person's ongoing life. As conveyed by many of the Japanese interviewees, the emotional impact was not just attributed to the shock of the person's death, for it also derived from regrets and guilt related to their independency with the deceased.

Following loss, bereaved people inevitably have to face their ongoing lives without the deceased. This experience may be very immediate, for example, one bereaved interviewee underwent immediate shock after her brother's death at the moment when she was informed:

> *… then I was told, well he's dead. So, my brain and my head went completely white and all I could think about was the children. And although initially I couldn't really move, it was the children I thought about first. (Mieka)*

As shown in the account, the emotional distress not only pertained to the shocking nature of the death, but could also be intensified by concerns about other family members. Subsequently, the bereaved could confront the emotional challenges in their ongoing lives:

> *For a few months it was very difficult - the anxiety was very unbearable. I went back to work and about two weeks later I had another big anxiety attack again… Very very difficult. Even now, I can't be alone at night. I'm scared to be alone at night. (Kioshi)*

Sometimes, a difficult death, such as a suicide, can worsen the situation. For instance, a bereaved sister experienced intense emotional struggles and even suicidal emotion due to the senselessness of her ongoing life:

> *And I didn't know the meaning of life anymore and probably it was better to die and this state of mind went on for two years… I had this strong feeling that I wanted to die and follow my brother... (Mieka)*

As shown in the above quote, the desperation was linked to a strong sense of interconnected bonds between the interviewee and her sister (Cleiren, 1993, p.62).

Apart from the shock and desperation, a number of interviewees reported their experiences of regret and guilt in their bereavement. For example, after losing her sister from alcoholism, a women experienced regret due to the unawareness of her sister's drinking addiction before death:

> *… she was drinking and I really regret that we couldn't find out about that much sooner. (Yui)*

Meanwhile, the regret of not being able to prevent death could cause feelings of guilt:

> *I feel so guilty because I didn't know any of this. (Momoka)*

In many cases, regret and guilt were combined:

I also had a sense of guilt and regret that I had not supported him spiritually when he was struggling with his existential anxiety about his cancer. (Misaki)

Thus, in living with memories of dying and death, many Japanese bereaved people tend to think they could have done more for the deceased before death and as a result, they might experience self-blame in their ongoing lives. By highlighting the feelings of regret and guilt, the accounts of these interviewees have conveyed the Japanese bereaved people's strong sense of responsibility for the deceased, thereby reflecting a reciprocity of support and responsibilities between the bereaved and the deceased.

Family impact

Losing a loved one, especially a close family member, can not only challenge the bereaved person's individual life in the emotional aspect, as shown above, but also affect their family lives by reshaping its structure and relationships among its members. When the deceased had been playing a key role in family interactions, the absence of the key person might undermine conversations between family members:

My family was sort of dysfunctional since everything revolved around mother - so my brother would talk to my mum and my mum would speak to my dad and I would speak to my mum. So, everything would go through my mum - we used her as a medium for all the conversation in the family. So, I didn't know how to speak to my father and brother and they didn't know how to speak to me either. (Akiko)

In Japan, where emphasis is still placed on the family as a key social unit, its members are expected to take on in certain roles within it (Imamura, 1990). Hence, the idea of failing to practise the prescribed roles could draw criticism from other family members and as a result, the relationships might become undermined. For instance, a bereaved wife found it hard to maintain relationships with her parents in law as they expected her as a wife to have done something more to prevent their son's death, which happened unexpectedly in a hospital toilet:

> *I kind of got the impression that they thought I should have done more… They seemed to believe I didn't go into the toilet because of that. So, I became reluctant to keep in touch with them after this. (Nanami)*

On the other hand, the missing role of the deceased in a family could also enable more direct interactions between family members and further enhance the family structure:

> *The first thing was that the family dynamic changed after my mother died. Before then it was a relationship between my mother and this child and mother and this child and so on. But when she died, it brought us all together and in particular, other than us bonding altogether, I became much closer to my sister and talked more with her and she was the most supportive at the time. With my in laws I have a very good relationship and with my nieces and nephews too, so then it became a kind of new family for me. (Arisu)*

Social impact

Apart from impact on the family, losing someone close can also reshape the bereaved person's wider social circles. Living in a relational society, Japanese people tend to define meaning and therefore determine their actions, largely depending on how others think about and understand them (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Accordingly, some interviewees found it hard to face and understand judgement from others. For example, negative comments from other people undermined a bereaved wife's ongoing life by causing her stress and even anger. As a result, she found herself wanting to withdraw from her social circle:

> *… my friends and people that I know some of the things really hurt me, like poking at my heart… so I started not wanting to see people and just wanting to be left alone… So, with some people I found myself getting angry with them and couldn't understand why they would say the things they were saying. (Takara)*

Conversely, the bereaved person could experience enhanced relationships with people close in their social circle, who were good friends:

> *I had friends who used to come around and sometimes they brought food and we would spend the evening together, or sometimes they might come and stay the night and that was very helpful. (Nanami)*

Practical impact

As shown so far, loss can bring a range of affective impacts to a bereaved person's ongoing life due to the changing relationships with the deceased, family members and others. Meanwhile, as reported by some bereaved people, the death of a loved one could create various practical disruptions. Regarding which, one wife highlighted how a highly commercialised and professionalised environment left her under pressure in dealing with some practicalities:

> *… after they confirmed his death, all of a sudden, the hospice became very business-like and I had to evacuate the room in half and hour and then call the funeral director – so, I was flooded with all these things I had to do. (Rin)*

Sometimes, loss could involve a prolonged process of administrative procedures of processing death that the bereaved interviewee was obliged to undertake:

> *So, there was a lot of administration – things to do with his pension – lots of documents – it probably took about three months processing it all… I just felt this is something that had to be done, so I just had to get on with it. (Noriko)*

The practical issues as shown in the above account, often required considerable time and energy to deal with. As a result, the bereaved person might be prevented from actually dealing with their loss, as one wife conveyed:

> *… I was suddenly thrown into all the things to be taken care of and so, there was no time to be sad and no time for any last message to give to my husband, so all that emotional stuff had to be put aside. (Rin)*

Summary: dealing with the impact in a relational society

In facing the death of a loved one, as discussed in this chapter, the bereaved person in Japan might predominantly face challenges and changes to their sense of interdependence in different aspects of their lives. When the interdependence with the deceased and others is questioned and challenged, the he or she often confronted with emotional distress and experiences difficulties in familial and social relationships. On the other hand, the bereaved person is also likely to gain enhanced bonds with others in response to the challenges of loss. In addition, the high level of professionalisation and bureaucratisation in Japan can also disrupt the bereaved person's ongoing life by leaving them little time to grieve and hence, loss can profoundly reshape the his or her relationships with the deceased, family members, others in wider social circles as well as some social structures. Meanwhile, the bereaved person is faced with how to live with these changes in their ongoing lives.

Living with the deceased in Japan

In facing the various impacts that had challenged and reshaped interdependent relationships with the deceased and others, the Japanese interviewees showed diverse ways of living with their loss and the secondary affects. As highlighted above, Japanese society is rich in its competing discourses of both traditional and contemporary values (Askew, 2004; Valentine, 2009c). Traditionally, longstanding beliefs and customs of ancestral veneration, spirituality and religion could enrich the bereaved interviewees' experiences of living with the deceased, whilst the pressure of social conformity and the emphasis on others might obstruct them from relocating themselves in their everyday lives. Meanwhile, the more contemporary values of promoting individuality and agency also provided alternative reference points. Thus, some bereaved interviewees attempted to deal with their bereavement in a more personalised form by customising available norms to their own ends. In this section, I analyse how the interviewees lived with their loss by drawing on the three broad themes of 'funerary practices', 'continuing bonds' and 'ongoing lives'.

Funerary practices

Funerals in Japan play a large role in people's bereavement experiences. From the perspective of transitional functions, the funeral involves a variety of rituals and customs than can instruct bereaved people in how to process death as well as how to adapt to their changing social status (Smith, 1974). As a social and often family affair, highly formalised with very specific expectations, the funeral in Japan may place considerable pressure on bereaved people to prioritise funerary practices and negotiation with others over their own needs (Suzuki, 2002). When investigating funerary practices in Japan, Suzuki (ibid.) found that, even though the funeral has shifted from community-based rituals to commercial services, Japanese people tend to conform with others, whether communities or funeral professionals, in dealing with funerals. In the interviews, the bereaved Japanese reported how the funeral was a significant part of their bereavement. In this section, I show the interviewees' different attitudes to the funerary practices in order to illustrate their diverse approaches to the authority of social expectations regarding funerals.

A funeral could provide a platform for the bereaved person to face the death of their loved one directly. Accordingly, some interviewees found the funeral a powerful and helpful process for understanding the reality of death:

> *… so, the funeral was the place that forced me to face the reality about her leaving me and it's very sad, but it really made me believe that she had really died – it made me aware that she had gone - not like an image or just like a feeling, but just me going through the process forced me to face the reality – and so being forced to face and accept the reality, I think is a very important step to go through – I think the ceremony has that meaning. (Izanagi)*

Further, funerals in Japan often involve a variety of rituals that can provide the bereaved person with instructions for processing death. As conveyed by one bereaved wife, funerary rituals contributed to a sense of transition, which enabled her to make sense of her husband's death:

Both of the ceremonies are to do with sending the deceased person to their resting place - sohsoh literally means sending the deceased to a resting place – so, the purpose is to focus on the transformation of the physical being into another kind of being. It was also to celebrate Shohei's life. I found the ritual very supportive - it sort of helped me find some order and peace in the chaos and turmoil of my feelings. (Misaki)

Sometimes, the funerary practices could not only transform the social status of the deceased, but also reinforce the social position of the bereaved person. For example, Koden, a monetary practice offered to mourners in Japan, was reported as being useful for the bereaved person:

…it involves koden - people bring money - and how much is appropriate and there are a lot of things around it. And it depends on people's values - my father was still alive when my mother passed away and he had to - he wanted to have something that symbolised his social position. (Yui)

Apart from the funerary practices, due to commercialisation, professionals might also play an important role when arranging the funeral. A woman reported her positive experiences with a funeral conductor:

The funeral was the first one for the family, so basically, we just totally relied on the funeral conductor introduced by the hospital - and the person did a great job, so we ended up using this person for my father and sister's funeral too. (Yui)

Whilst some interviewees would draw on rituals and rely on professionals to process their loved one's death, others expressed their resistance to the highly formalised and commercialised funerals. In contrast to people who acknowledged the supportive roles of rituals, a few interviewees perceived funeral rites as outdated, impersonalised and therefore unnecessary. They also tried to challenge what they saw as interference from funeral professionals:

I feel that the Buddhist funeral ritual needs renovating for the modern mind - the chants are incomprehensible and the mood is too somber and

impersonal... I don't remember much about it except that we had to choose Shohei's casket and the funeral director tried to get me to choose the most expensive type. My daughter intervened and said, 'but isn't it going to become ashes anyway?' That silenced him. (Misaki)

As this case demonstrates, the bereaved family could refuse or challenge the idea of conforming to the traditional rituals and the role of professionals in the funeral, preferring to show their concerns about individuality and agency.

As demonstrated so far in this section, the interviewees conveyed different and even contradictory attitudes towards funerary practices, whilst their accounts also showed how they were interweaving different ideas and values to personalise the funerals. Some interviewees followed the norm, while others managed to challenge social expectations of funerals, which prioritise prescribed rituals and procedures rather than individuality. However, some interviewees reported how they found their own ways of balancing social expectations and individual needs. For example, one daughter personalised her father's funeral by highlighting his own preferences:

Yes, we had it at home and we played his favourite singer's song throughout the ceremony and we had a very warm - we were able to see him off in a very relaxed atmosphere, so exactly how it was written in his will. And that was a kind of discovery for me, that you can have a very private, small funeral. (Akiko)

Sometimes, the bereaved person could also redefine the conventional practices to serve his or her own ends. A husband explained and justified his happiness and satisfaction in relation to being able to give his wife a Buddhist name, which is usually given by a Buddhist monk to the deceased to help the spirit reach the peacefulness in the heavenly land:

… the monk probably doesn't know anything about the person and so, isn't the best person to come up with the name. So, my father told me to prepare her name. So, I thought about her character and life in itself and I chose a Chinese

character to suit her personality. I was very happy that I was able to name her – to find a name that I was satisfied with. (Izanagi)

Moreover, one wife overturned the accepted traditions by not having a conventional funeral:

So, during those three days his friends visited his brother's house to see him and say goodbye to him, so we didn't have a funeral. So, for those three days all his friends came to say goodbye to him, so I took that as the funeral rather than having a conventional ceremony. (Rin)

To summarise, funerals could not only provide the bereaved interviewees with a platform to face and process death, for they might also involve different parties including the bereaved, the deceased, family, funeral professionals and others. In spite of the strong influence of traditions, as promoted by the funeral industry in Japan, the bereaved people from the interviews showed their diverse responses by negotiating available social discourses in their interactions with others. In so doing, some interviewees sought their own ways of dealing with and commemorating their loved one's death, whilst others were more concerned to conform to social expectations in relation to the funeral.

Continuing bonds

Funerals, as discussed above, often form a significant part of people's bereavement experience in Japan in highlighting the transition from before to after death. Furthermore, this transition was by no means a short-term process that can be completed only by the funerary practices, but it was often continued in the longer term in the bereaved person's ongoing life. When facing the loss of a loved one, both adjusting to the absence and recovering and maintaining the presence of the deceased involved interviewees in ongoing interaction with the deceased in different life aspects. Living in a society that is rich in spiritual and religious beliefs, as demonstrated, Japanese people often seek continuing bonds with the deceased as a natural part of their ongoing lives in the light of interdependence and reciprocity with ancestors (Klass, Silverman et al., 1996; Smith, 1974; Valentine, 2010; 2018). Meanwhile, the more postmodern values and norms can also

shape the forms of such bonds, thus contributing a more diverse picture. In this section, I analyse the Japanese interviews with reference to 'traditional bonds', 'individualised bonds' and 'double-edged bonds'.

Traditional bonds

Traditional discourses on spirituality and religion have a considerable impact on Japanese people's everyday lives (Hayashi, 2008; Maruyama, 2004), including the relationships with the deceased after death (Valentine, 2010; 2018). As reported by a majority of the interviewees, the ongoing presence of the deceased could be strongly associated with spiritual beliefs:

> *I believe that though the body is not there the spirit will remain, so when I need it, probably the spirit will be here. (Takara)*

Furthermore, the spirit of the deceased could not only remain as a static presence in the bereaved person's life, but rather, it was often granted agency, which could further impact on the bereaved person. The impact of the deceased was often referred to as a sense of support originating from the spirit. Following Takara's account above, she also reported the presence of her deceased husband as a source of support:

> *So, for the first six months after he died, it supported me and it was a sense of - it supported me to have it - but I feel his spirit exists. (Takara)*

Sometimes, the ongoing presence could even have enough power to shape the bereaved person's decision-making in ongoing life. For instance, one wife found the connection with her husband was stopping her from committing suicide:

> *It's a strange thing to say, but I kind of feel that, supposing I decided I wanted to try to die, I feel that he would in some way try to stop me - he would not let me do it and I almost feel that I can't die. (Noriko)*

Apart from being influenced by the deceased, the bereaved interviewees, as an interdependent being, also tended to have impact on the deceased in various ways. As explained before, a bad

death was likely to unsettle the spirit of the deceased and when facing such a situation, several interviewees conveyed their sense of responsibility for that person by relying on supernatural power to help their spirit. For example, one girl asked a psychic healer to pacify her friend's spirit, which she saw as being trapped by suicide:

> *… she was pulled by the spirit of those who had already died by suicide, but the psychic healer pulled her up to the heavens, so now she's OK. (Momoko)*

Even if the spirit was not in a difficult situation, the bereaved interviewee might still provide their support to the deceased on an everyday basis. In Japan, Buddhist practices are deeply embedded in rituals and customs involved in bereavement (Smith, 1974). In some interviews, the bereaved people highlighted the butsudan, a Buddhist-style family alter in the household, which provides a platform for making contact with and offering support to the deceased:

> *… I pray and the butsudan is sort of like a Greek temple. It has a pillar and there is a very, how can I say, a divine atmosphere that makes me feel I'm connecting to another world. (Harui)*

The sense of offering support to benefit the deceased, especially to a family member, was closely related to ancestor veneration, involving various rituals and customs of paying respect as well as providing ongoing support to the ancestral figures in the family:

> *We read a sutra every morning and night and it has five parts and in the last part we read my mum and dad's kaimyo (Buddhist name) to benefit their spirits and we go to the grave at higan (the day for another world) and obon (the day for the dead) and whenever we have time and we have stupors for them. (Sakura)*

By supporting the spirit, some bereaved interviewees also conveyed their intention to obtain protection and blessing from the deceased in return:

> *I also went to my father's family tomb, where his grandparents and other relatives lie. I got it cleaned, decorated it, made a small contribution to the*

temple. I hadn't been there in over 25 years. I thought that by paying respect to my ancestors, my misfortunes might end. That it would calm their anger or maybe give me their protection. (Kioshi)

As shown above, the ongoing relationships could be built on reciprocity between the bereaved and the deceased in exchange of support. That is, these bereaved people's interview responses were strongly shaped by the sense of interdependence by drawing upon traditional norms of spiritual and religious beliefs and practices. Meanwhile, the support provided to the deceased's spirit could also contribute to a sense of harmony between the two sides, which could further enhance their interdependence. In sum, continuing bonds with the deceased in Japan can be preserved and developed through spirituality along with religion in the form of reciprocal and harmonious relationships in bereaved people's ongoing lives.

Individualised bonds

Whilst continuing bonds would appear often to reflect traditional values and beliefs in Japan, as shown above, due to the mixture of competing discourses available in society, more individualised bonds with the deceased were also shown in the accounts. That is, on the one hand, the presence of the deceased could be defined through spiritual beliefs, whilst on the other, some bereaved interviewees would draw on more secular resources to individualise the presence of the deceased, although they might have to justify prioritising individual choice over traditional scripts. For example, a husband had to explain how and why he felt the presence of his wife in relation to a song rather than being in heaven:

… talking about where she is – there's a popular song called 'thousand winds' that was a best-selling album last year – I don't want to think that she is in the grave – and I don't want to think that she is in heaven living happily there – I don't want to dramatise and think of her being there either –(Izanagi)

Beliefs and rituals, in providing the bereaved person with a frame of reference for making sense of their loss, could also include the relationship with the deceased. However, the bereaved

person might resist conventional ideas and alternatively discover their own way to be connected with the deceased. As reported by one wife, she justified more direct and individual bonds with her husband without relying on the traditional family alter, the butsudan:

> *…the butsudan has nothing to do with it - but what I feel is that he is talking to me directly and what he's thinking comes straight into my head – so, I don't feel I have to go to the butsudan and do anything. (Noriko)*

Similarly, the bereaved person might also achieve more a personalised perception of ancestor veneration. For instance, one woman reinterpreted the definition of reciprocity with ancestors in her own way:

> *… people are just relying on ancestors to do something for them… But I think ancestor worship is more about you reporting something to them, rather than relying on them and if you don't know what to do about something or can't make a decision, to help find some answers to the question. It's one tool that you can use to help you make decisions. It's not meant to be asking them a favour (Yui).*

However, the bereaved person did not necessarily reject the traditions, for some interviewees conveyed how they integrated traditional beliefs and more personal interests in order to enhance the ongoing relationships with the deceased. For example, a sister found her hobby of making collages could be linked to healing her brother's unsettled spirit:

> *… in Japan people say that after you commit suicide you will be locked in the dark and so, by making collages I tried to lighten the darkness where my brother is and also to help his spirit... But by doing it (collages), I also wanted to try and connect with my brother and to try and heal my sadness. (Mieka)*

Double-edged bonds

However, bonds with the deceased were not necessarily positive, in which case, preserving relationships could cause ongoing challenging and disruption to the bereaved person's life. As conveyed by some interviewees, strong ties could be a poignant reminder of the absence of the deceased:

> *… the fact that my previous husband - I always thought about him being around me… I think my, um, scar in my heart is still there - I can't erase it, but I'm moving forward. I think that wound or scar will never heal - it will co-exist with me. I don't think I have quite overcome it yet, but I'm moving forward. My pain grows on my husband's birthday or on our anniversary - then it comes back. (Nanami)*

In addition, the reciprocity with the deceased, including ancestors, was reported to have a negative impact on the bereaved person's ongoing life. In particular, the ancestor veneration in Japan is largely based on the obligations of exchanging support and thus, it is believed that failing to meet obligations could result in vengeance from the ancestors (Smith, 1974). Regarding which, a man who had lost multiple family members interpreted his misfortunes in life by referring to his ancestors in a negative sense:

> *I somehow felt that we must have done something wrong, perhaps we've neglected our ancestors and that maybe one of the reasons for our incessant misfortunes. (Kioshi)*

To sum up, the bonds reported in the above examples, it has shown how living and interacting with the deceased was often considered to be a natural part of their ongoing lives. By drawing on widely shared traditions of spirituality and religion, some bereaved interviewees were able to recover harmony and maintain reciprocity with the deceased through various forms of interactions. Whilst others sought to reject, revise and adapt traditional bonds with the deceased to create more individualised forms, but they also usually sought to justify these with reference to the authoritative role of tradition in society. Furthermore, preserving bonds with the deceased could have a double-edged impact on the bereaved person's ongoing life by bringing both

benefits as well as disruption. Nonetheless, nearly all the interviewees still conveyed how bonds with deceased were an integral part of their ongoing process of meaning-making.

Ongoing life

Dealing with loss is multi-dimensional, being a part of bereaved people's ongoing lives (Marris, 1974; Valentine, 2007a; 2013). As shown in the Japanese interviews, the bereaved person could negotiate and interweave both traditional and postmodern values and customs to find meaning in their loss as well as for their ongoing lives in general. Following the loss of a loved one, bereaved interviewees were often faced with how to adjust and further maintain relationships with the deceased. As explained above, he or she could develop various forms of bonds with the deceased, Furthermore, these bonds could be integrated into the bereaved person's ongoing life, thereby continuously shaping their sense of meaning. For example, one bereaved wife still felt her husband as part of her life even though she decided to start a new one abroad:

> *… eventually I took the initiative, left my job and made the big decision to go back to full-time study in Canada - in other words, leave Japan for a while. It felt as though I was being given a new life, but not in the sense of leaving Shohei behind... our relationship continues as part of my life. (Misaki)*

The death itself could also be perceived and further integrated into the bereaved person's ongoing life. For example, a daughter reported how her father's death shaped her decision to become a teacher:

> *He was 62. The fact that he died helped me think about things from the other person's point of view and so, after I graduated I went on to become a Japanese teacher and so, to understand the perspective of the other person was very important for my career - like a gift to me. (Arisu)*

Some interviewees also conveyed how family and social involvement could contribute to their sense of meaning. In the light of the significance of family in Japanese people's lives, giving and receiving support from family members were confirmed by some interviewees as a source of

meaning, which enabled them to go on living. For example, Mieka found motivation to go on living from looking after her brother's children:

> *I think because I had a close relationship with my brother's kids, especially the youngest one - when my sister-in-law got pregnant again I really looked after her other kid, especially taking him to school and making his lunch and that probably helped me to carry on. (Mieka)*

Furthermore, as a relational being, the Japanese person can find meaning for his or her ongoing life through interdependent relationships, not only with family, but also with others. For example, after losing his sister and mother due to traumatic suicides, Kioshi rediscovered meaning in his ongoing life by interacting with co-workers as well as relying on a supernatural being:

> *But I think what has helped me is my work - being busy at work allows me to concentrate on something else … my co-workers are absolutely great people - my wife has been absolutely fantastic… and God and the church. It's so beyond human capacity to understand this human pain that I had to turn to a superior being. Now I pray every day. (Kioshi)*

As shown above in this section, the bereaved interviewees predominantly identified their lives as meaningful by emphasising interpersonal relationships, including with the deceased, family, colleagues and even superior beings. However, for those who were more concerned with personal and individual aspects of meaning in life, they might turn to alternative sources. For example, psychology, as a more western discourse focusing on the individual psyche, was frequently mentioned in the interviews to refer to understanding and justifying personal emotions and individualised meaning, which are little referenced in traditional norms. For example, a father reported how he found Robert Neimeyer's theory of meaning reconstruction provided a psychotherapeutic method to adapt to his loss in relation to reconstructing meaning and sense of hope in his ongoing life:

> *That process was like going through what Robert Neimeyer says about the reconstruction of meaning. Also, the vision psychology not only dealt with*

bereavement and grief, the programme was about recreating your vision and your future dreams and plans. So, as well as helping us to go back over our grief we could also look forward and reconstruct our future vision. (Harui)

These recollections from Japanese people illustrate how the ongoing life of a bereaved person is largely shaped by the sense of interdependence not only with the deceased, but also others. As a primary source of meaning, the conformity to interdependent relationships strongly shapes the bereaved person's thoughts and actions through which they seek to understand and justify their lives. Meanwhile, due to little emphasis on individual life and values in the traditional culture, some more western norms related to self-determination might also be drawn on to construct meaning in life from a more individualistic perspective. In spite of the diverse picture of how these bereaved people made sense of their ongoing lives, the meaning that the Japanese interviewees conveyed was interwoven, rather than dichotomous. That is to say, they tended to draw from a mixed source of traditional (relational) and contemporary (individualistic) discourses to make sense of their experiences. However, as shown in the accounts, the sense of being relational would appear to be more likely to be recovered for making sense of and justifying ongoing lives.

3. Conclusion

In this chapter, a range of reported experiences from Japan have been studied to understand the motivation of bereaved people living in a society with competing socio-cultural discourses. I have focused on how motivation shaped interviewees' experiences before, at and after death in making sense of their experience. Furthermore, by speaking their culture in the interviews (Geertz, 1983), these bereaved people illustrated Japan as both a traditional and postmodern society, where both collective and individualistic values were shared and acknowledged. As such, I further explored how the bereaved interviewees were motivated to accept, adapt, revise or reject some norms to recover the meaning in their ongoing lives.

In the interviews, these bereaved people tended to identify themselves as relational beings in general and further to apply this relationality to their interactions with others by developing reciprocal and harmonious relationships. In bereavement, the interviewees reported how they had to face the absence of their loved one who had largely contributed to their sense of meaning in many aspects of their lives. In order to recover from the shattering of this meaning, interviewees negotiated socio-cultural norms and further used these to serve their own purpose in going on to live a meaningful life. Some interviewees drew on available cultural scripts to convey how they were motivated to recover their interdependence with others; while other interviewees conveyed how they were motivated to individualise their experiences in order to develop a sense of self-determination and individual autonomy.

Chapter 6

Motivation in bereavement in China

Introduction

This chapter analyses 16 narratives from mainland China, including reported experiences from primary and secondary interviews and written narratives collected via different platforms (see Chapter 3), with the aim being to explore bereaved people's everyday experiences and their motivation in bereavement. These experiences concern various types of loss[8] and represent diverse generations in contemporary China. As mentioned in chapter 2, bereavement in mainland China has been largely neglected from the academic perspective. By adopting a sociological viewpoint, I pay special attention to the relationship between Chinese society, which is still largely collectivist and traditional, but also fast-changing (Halskov Hansen and Svarverud, 2010) and the individual, in dealing with the loss of a loved one. In so doing, I aim to reach a more explicit understanding of motivation in bereavement in the Chinese context by exploring how socio-cultural structures shape these people's bereavement, including how they are motivated to recover meaning in their ongoing lives. From a comparative perspective, these Chinese narratives also provide a point of reference from which to compare how bereaved people in Britain (Chapter 4) and Japan (Chapter 5), as well as, Shidu parents in China (Chapter 7) are motivated to make sense of their experiences.

1. Background: death and bereavement in contemporary China

China is often seen as a collective and traditional society, where social conformity is prioritised, leaving little room for the individual choice and agency (Stockman, 2013). In the long history of

[8] The sample in this chapter does not include interviews of bereaved Shidu parents, who are bereaved following the death of an only child. Rather, I present a more general picture of bereaved Chinese people to provide a further comparison with the specific group of Shidu parents in the next chapter.

Chinese society, traditional values have predominantly emphasised individual participation in collective activities and encouraged individual sacrifices to 'greater' values shared by broader groups and communities (Triandis, 1988). In particular, the Confucian ethics over an approximately two thousands years' long development, has promoted a culture defined by reciprocity and social harmony between individuals and groups. Based on a hierarchical structure in groups, including family, individuals are strictly positioned within certain roles, in which, whilst they benefit from the group's resources, they are also obliged to support and protect the group (Bedford and Hwang, 2003). As such, Chinese people are more likely to see themselves as a dependent group member, rather than an independent individual. Furthermore, living in groups consisting of others, such as family members, neighbours and co-workers, people tend to pay particular attention to relationships with others in order to maintain the group as orderly and harmonious by seeking acceptance and admiration from others (Qi, 2017). Hence, the face (mianzi in Chinese), which is defined by Goffman (1956) as the presentation of self in relation to others, is a strong concern for Chinese people in their social relationships, not only in terms of how they present themselves to others, but also, how their image is evaluated and regarded by others (Goffman, 1956). Thus, interpersonal relationships tend to be part of Chinese people's perceptions of themselves, defining them as relational beings. As a result, social conformity to the group is embedded in Chinese people's everyday lives in the form of highlighting the authoritative position of groups and emphasising the needs of other members (Bedford and Hwang, 2003).

In particular, as emphasised by Confucianism, the family has been a primary unit in the Chinese social and moral systems in relation to its fundamental power of supporting and regulating individuals (Slote and De Vos, 1998). Being built on biological and marital bonds, family in China has been largely maintained and continued by the exchange of support within and between generations (Park and Chesla, 2007). Due to the benefits provided by the family, its members are obligated to support not only the living family members but also ancestral kinship figures. Accordingly, individuals in China are likely to define themselves in a family context through reciprocal relationships with both living and dead family members. Furthermore, Chinese culture

has developed a diversity of customs and rituals, such as filial piety and ancestor worship, to maintain and recover reciprocity within the family (Moise, 2013; Watson and Rawski, 1990).

As explained above, traditional values and customs in China have largely emphasised collectivism and particularly family values. From a historical perspective, these traditional norms have also undergone tremendous changes in modern Chinese history, being shaped by the unique socio-political circumstances (Stockman, 2013). Until the foundation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the traditional order of family and social lives had remained predominant. However, alongside the introduction of socialist doctrines by the Communist Party, especially during the nationwide Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s, the significance of traditional norms was challenged by loyalty to the nation and belief in the proletarian state. As a consequence, the primality of family was greatly diminished; meanwhile, the moral and cultural systems of Confucianism as well as religious beliefs were abolished by the state. However, following the economic reforms in the late 1970s, the restrictions on traditional values and norms were relaxed and hence, much of these systems has been more or less recovered in Chinese people's lives since then (Moise, 2013). Furthermore, alongside the fast socioeconomic transformation in recent decades, a rise in individualisation has occurred, especially in socioeconomically developed regions among the younger generations, which is increasingly shaping people's perceptions of themselves and their relationships with others (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2010).

Given the above described social background, death and bereavement in China have been profoundly shaped by the changing positions of traditional scripts in society. Traditionally, the death of a loved one, primarily a family member, was largely associated with a range of rituals and customs through which the death was highlighted as a social/spiritual transition (Watson and Rawski, 1990). Through this series of transitional rituals, such as services on each seventh day within 49 days after the death, the deceased is transformed into a heavenly and often ancestral figure[9], who is believed to maintain reciprocal relationships with survivors through daily

[9] In traditional Chinese culture, spirits of the dead people are in theory believed to rest in peace in another world, maintaining interactive relationships with the living. However, when death is bad,

interactions or annual commemorations (Ding, 2013; O'Connor, 2016). Meanwhile, the bereaved person is expected to return to normal life and refocus on their 'life', reflecting the cultural emphasis on values and benefits in life, rather than death (Watson and Rawski, 1990). Whilst Chinese bereaved people are still faced with how to deal with relationships with the deceased and how to continue their everyday lives, they are often expected or feel pressured to 'restrain the sorrow and adapt to the change', a popular condolence message offered to bereaved people (Li, 2015). In addition, superstitious beliefs often mean that any references to death are associated with misfortune, leaving people feeling resistant to talking about it and bereavement in everyday life.

In addition to the high formalisation and strong influence of traditions of death and bereavement in China, governmental impact has also profoundly shaped Chinese people's attitudes towards and practices regarding these conventional scripts. The atheistic and collectivist doctrines of socialism and communism introduced by the state largely undermined or even overtook the role of traditions in people's lives in the first decades after the foundation of the PRC. Traditional values and customs, such as religious beliefs, ancestor veneration and the Confucian ethics of the family, were strongly suppressed or even abolished by the state, being categorised as 'feudal superstition' (Zuo, 1991). Meanwhile, the introduction of cremation, due to the concern with limited agricultural land, also shaped and undermined the thousand years long traditions of burials (Mates, 2016). As a result, funerals and the following rituals and customs of death and mourning were greatly simplified, leaving bereaved people to cope with their loss in a more atheistic and collectivist society.

However, following the economic reforms, the former traditions of death rituals, ancestor worship and religious beliefs were gradually restored in people's day-to-day lives. Meanwhile, the growing access to western norms, such as Christian beliefs, natural burials and psychology, has also provided alternative resources for bereaved people to draw on to process and make sense of death. In urban, especially metropolitan areas, counselling services, self-help groups and

especially when the deceased is not accepted or has no family, the 'homeless' spirit is likely to become a ghost or an evil spirit, wandering in this world and bringing harm to the living.

more naturalised or humanised cemeteries are emerging, though these new resources still remain inaccessible to the majority of Chinese bereaved people.

2. A Chinese experience of bereavement

Bearing in mind the social background of death and bereavement in China, I analyse bereavement narratives from contemporary China to gain insight into how these bereaved people were motivated to recover meaning in their life by negotiating norms related to the primarily traditional, but fast-changing, Chinese society. Considering the dramatic social changes in contemporary China, I have selected a sample of bereaved people representing different age groups to shed light on generational differences in how they made sense of their ongoing lives before, at and after the death of their loved one. In this section, an explicit picture of motivation in relation to bereavement experiences in China is presented by analysing 16 narratives to consider experiences 'before death', 'at dying and death' and 'after death. In so doing, I show an ongoing process of motivation in how these bereaved interviewees made sense of their experience before death, how these meanings were challenged as a result of experiencing the dying and death of a loved one and further how meaning was recovered and reconstructed after death, reflecting a primary emphasis on collectivism and reciprocity.

2.1 Before death

As shown in the narratives from Britain and Japan, the lived experiences with the deceased before death were reported as being a significant part of the bereaved interviewees' ongoing lives. Similarly, in the Chinese narratives, these bereaved people's lives prior to death were also conveyed as largely consisting of relationships with the deceased. These were predominantly described as intimate in relation to the sense of reciprocity and priority given to the other. Furthermore, intimacy was often associated with a family context, in which the sense of support and responsibility was developed. In order to gain an insight into the bereaved person's experiences and meaning in life before their loss, I analyse the narratives to illustrate their

'intimate relationships' as well as 'distant relationships' with their loved one; further, I move to discuss the 'nature of relationships'.

Intimate Relationships

In recollecting their lives before the death, these Chinese narrators predominantly referred to the deceased as an important part of their lives by highlighting a strong sense of reciprocity. As someone close, the deceased was reported as remaining an intimate figure with positive characteristics associated not only with his or her outstanding personality, but also concern for others:

> *He (granddad) was very hard-working and had kept the good habits of diligence and frugality during his life time. He acquired such good virtues from his generation and he was definitely one of the best… He was always thoughtful to others. When he was 78 years old, he still gave his seat to a pregnant woman on a bus. Whenever he went to visit his children, he never stayed for long as he didn't want to bother them. (Qiao)*

Furthermore, these characteristics could also be integrated into the narrator's relationship with the deceased prior to death. For example, one man highlighted the selfless support he received from his grandfather:

> *I still clearly remember, he spent hundreds of CNY (the Chinese currency) to buy a Walkman audio player for me when I was in primary school. That was a lot of money at the time. He never spent even one penny on himself, but he didn't hesitate to buy it for me at all… he did his best to support my study, he had never expected anything back from me. All he wanted was a good future for me. (Tao)*

As shown in many accounts, intimate relationships were not necessarily defined by one-sided support from the deceased, for they could also be constructed from interdependent support

between the two parties. A mother reported that her intimate relationships with her two deceased sons were largely dependent on the long-term exchange of support:

> *I did my best to raise my children. My husband was in prison due to the Cultural Revolution, so I had to scavenge garbage or even beg on the street to make a living… my sons used to say they would give me the best care they could, as I had sacrificed so much for them. And they did so, they were very filial to me... Whenever I felt even a little bit unwell, they always rushed to take me to the hospital. (Li)*

In some cases, intimacy could also be interpreted as control or sometimes even interference from the deceased before death. For example, a daughter reconstructed her life as largely dependent on her father who was very controlling:

> *He made decisions for everything in my life, from what to eat for breakfast to what to learn as a hobby, and further, where to live after I finished uni. Because of this, I even gave myself a motto: "ignore my own consciousness, wait for my father to make the decision". He is much stronger than me, and he knows much more than me, I just need to follow him anyway. So, why should I still insist on my own opinions? (Chang)*

Distant relationships

Whilst the Chinese narratives generally conveyed the relationship with the deceased as being intimate, a few people also reported distant relationships with the deceased to justify limited interactions between the two parties:

> *My father's death wasn't too shocking for me. We barely talked in the house, we probably only talked several times a year when he was alive… We didn't have very good relationships, we either didn't talk or else we argued with each other. (Wan)*

As reported by the son above, the distance between his father and him explained the lack of intimate and interdependent bonds with his father, and therefore the limited impact on his everyday life of his father's death.

Nature of relationships

As shown in the above accounts, interviewees reported how the relationship with the deceased before loss was predominantly positive and intimate. More specifically, these bereaved people's sense of intimacy strongly derived from their reciprocal and sometimes dependent relationship with their loved one before loss. As such, these intimate relationships developed on a day-to-day basis were likely to be considered a significant part of the bereaved person's life prior to loss. That is to say, for these bereaved people the characteristics of and relationship with their loved one was part of their taken-for-granted meaning in life, shaping how they made sense of everyday experiences and perceived themselves:

> *… how my father raised me and the environment he constructed for me contributed to my character and values. (Chang)*

Moreover, the intimate nature of these relationships was largely defined through support and responsibilities in family contexts, showing these as the primary source of meaning in people's lives in China. For example, a man who consecutively lost four family members in a few years recalled his happiness in having had a large and complete family:

> *I had a very happy family of seven people… For me, happiness was all the family members being able to sit together for a meal. If we could sit, eat and talk as a family, then it would be happiness. That was all I needed. (Ma)*

These accounts have conveyed how Chinese bereaved people's meaning in life before death is largely developed from interdependent relationships with the deceased as well as the sense of family. In this way. they tend to define themselves as relational beings and family members, these roles shaping different aspects of their pre-loss lives.

2.2 At dying and death

By developing intimate relationships with their loved one before death, as discussed above, the bereaved people were likely to integrate the deceased into their own sense of meaning in making sense of their experiences and justifying their thoughts and actions. The process and reality of losing a loved one have been reported in the Chinese accounts and elsewhere to illustrate the disruption and shattering of the meaning for their ongoing lives. As strongly conveyed by these Chinese bereaved people, the priority given to others and the sense of responsibility greatly shaped their experiences of witnessing and making sense of the death of their loved one. In this section, I analyse these narratives to explore the experience of dying and death in China by focusing on two themes: 'dealing with dying' and 'making sense of death'.

Dealing with dying

The Chinese narratives, similar to the British and Japanese accounts, generally described dying as a prolonged and often difficult process, which involved not only the suffering of the dying person, but also the effect on other people, primarily, the bereaved people and other family members. In order to capture the picture of dying in the Chinese context, I analyse the accounts by looking at 'suffering in dying', 'burdens to others', 'family involvement' and 'justifying the dying'.

Suffering in dying

Regarding the suffering involved in dying, the physical pain and body deterioration were often addressed by the narrators as being difficult for both the deceased and the bereaved:

> *One night, he (father) coughed so badly that he told me he would like to receive euthanasia. He wished he could die in peace when he was asleep. When he was talking about a painless death, I really felt heartbroken. I was so bad that I couldn't even breathe. (Sun)*

Sometimes, unsupportive health professionals and systems could worsen the bereaved person's feeling of helplessness and desperation:

> *The doctor asked us not to embarrass them and told us to go back home. They said, my dad's tumour was too big to have radiotherapy…After I came out from the doctor's room, I just collapsed onto the floor crying. I felt so wronged and that it was unfair. I didn't care how other people looked at me, I was shouting, 'why is my dad incurable? Why should it happen to us??' (Zhao)*

As such, a painful and suffering dying process would not only cause intense physical and emotional pain to the dying, but could also distress the bereaved person due to their bonds with the dying person. Further, as shown in some cases, the bereaved person's emotional distress could be escalated by the context of medicalisation:

> *People like my dad, who are diagnosed with late stage cancer, suffer greatly, especially those who have chemotherapy, they often have to suffer from both physical and emotional torture… Even now, I still remember how he looked like when he was in the hospital. Because of the torture from the cancer and the chemotherapy, he had to face unbearable pain every day. It was really hard to think about it. (Zhao)*

In witnessing and perceiving the sufferings of their loved one, the Chinese bereaved people from the sample conveyed a strong sense of interconnection by highlighting their responsibilities to the dying person. For example, a mother, who watched her son dying from terminal stage liver cancer, expressed her wish to die instead of her son so as to fulfil her motherly responsibilities:

> *As a mother, I'd have liked to sacrifice everything I had to save his life (from the cancer). I told him that I had got a big family with children and grandchildren, so I have nothing more to expect. I really wanted to use my liver to replace my son's, so that I could die for him. (Li)*

Burdens to others

A prolonged dying often involved care and support contributed by different parties. In China, where social welfare and palliative care are not yet well-developed, as shown in the accounts, care and support for the dying person was primarily dependent on family members. Some interviewees recalled their difficulties in taking care of the dying person:

> *She had been lying in bed not for a while, but three or four, no, four or five years. We couldn't do anything else except taking care of her. She was not able to go to the toilet on her own and we had to pump a liquid diet into her mouth every day. My father, my younger brother and I had a rotation for the duty, we exchanged each night or half-way through each night… It was a long time, as well as my mother, we all suffered a lot. She was unconscious, like in a vegetative state. We were exhausted as it lasted for a very long time. (Ang)*

Whilst some bereaved people did not have to bear such direct burdens, they still found the dying process difficult when they saw it through the eyes of other family members:

> *Granddad was really sick at the time, so grandma had to feed and clean granddad every day; meanwhile, she had also to deal with her own sadness and distress from witnessing my grandad's dying. It was a huge pressure… I really felt sorry for not being able to help her, because she had to face all of these by herself. She must have been very sad, frightened and desperate. (QIao)*

As such, the bereaved person as a member of the family had strong bonds, not only with the dying person, but also often with other family members, thus showing strong family solidarity. Furthermore, by feeling responsible for the burdens given to the family member, the bereaved person also reflected the dominant sense of reciprocity based on familial support and responsibilities. Hence, dying could be defined as difficult, if it violated the strong and interrelated bonds between family members.

Family involvement

As highlighted above, family was considered as a primary source for providing support to the dying person. In fact, some narrators believed the dying person was able to access the finest care and support only because the family had been playing the primary role. Other reported that their loved one's dying was due to lack of appropriate care from the family and hence, it was considered as a difficult death. For example, a brother recalled the hard time that his sister had when she was dying in the army away from the family:

> *She was alone in the army hospital. No one was really taking care of her; all of meals were served by the army, nothing very nutritious… The troop sent a nurse to look after her, but it wasn't enough. She still had to stay alone for most of the time. (Ang)*

Meanwhile, for some narrators, family involvement was a strong indicator of a good dying, showing the significance of the dying person and the solid bonds in the family. Whilst lack of family involvement was believed to challenge the ideal picture of the dying person as well as the family solidarity, which was likely to cause distress to not only the dying, but also the bereaved:

> *When grandad was dying, none of his sons were there. Because of different reasons, all of his sons stopped their engagements with grandad and they barely went to visit him as well… Grandad had four sons and one daughter, but he couldn't see any of them before he passed away. It was the saddest thing ever for him to experience in his life. I really feel heartbroken for him… (Tao)*

Justifying the dying

Dying, as conveyed above, was largely considered negative not only due to the suffering involved, but also to the challenges it posed to the strong sense of shared support and responsibilities within the family. Whilst such reciprocity and family solidarity were challenged in the process of

dying, many of these Chinese bereaved people also showed their determination and the actions they took to justify the dying and recover a sense of meaning.

As in many accounts, the suffering and deterioration involved in dying was likely to undermine the quality of the dying person's life. Hence, some bereaved people tried to find relief in the minimal suffering involved in their loved one's dying:

> *From another perspective, I think my father was lucky as he didn't suffer much before he passed away. Many late stage cancer patients die of organ failure, which is always accompanied by huge pain. However, my father passed away very peacefully. The doctor said, he might die from a thrombus in his brain, which was less likely to cause pain. For a cancer patient, such a painless death was really a blessing. (Zhao)*

Moreover, some also conveyed how they decided to conceal the prognosis of terminal illness from the dying person in order to reduce the emotional shock and disruption. They preferred to construct a more peaceful and harmonious environment for their loved one at the last stage of his or her life. For example, a wife deliberately concealed the truth from her husband as she did not want to shock him, especially as their son had already been diagnosed with uraemia several years ago:

> *… I didn't tell him that he had been diagnosed with a late stage lung cancer, because I was worried that he might be knocked down. Our son has been suffering from the uraemia, so I thought it would be a double shock, if he knew he was terminally ill. I cried so much that my eyes become red, but I never cried in front of him. Sometimes he asked me what had happened, I always tried to find other excuses or change the topic… I was afraid he knew he was having the chemotherapy. Luckily, I knew people working in the hospital, so I deliberately asked them to hide the labels on the bottles when they were injecting the drips into him… (Wang)*

As shown above and in other accounts, the decision to conceal the diagnosis was strongly associated with the sense of familial reciprocity, the bereaved person feeling responsible for securing the dying person's quality of life without being concerned about his or her own agency. Sometimes, the pressure from the larger family and broader social circles might also urge the bereaved person to following certain expectations for a more 'acceptable' dying, thereby generally neglecting the dying person's agency and choices. For example, one son and his family had to continue his father's chemotherapy, which caused suffering and distress to his father and the family, due to the external pressure on family obligations:

> *The medical intervention, such as inserting tubes into the body and relying on machines, caused huge damage to my dad and caused enormous discomfort to the family… Both my dad and we (the family) wanted to have the palliative care so that dad could have a more peaceful time both physically and emotionally. However, the more important thing that we had to deal with was how to explain why we decided to give up the treatments to relatives and friends. We didn't want them to think we had abandoned my dad… (Zhao)*

Furthermore, when facing various challenges to the interdependence and family solidarity taken for granted in their everyday lives, many bereaved people from the narratives strove to recover the reciprocal relationships with the dying person by emphasising the exchange of care and support between the two parties:

> *I was taking care of him the whole time after he was diagnosed with liver cancer. I sold one of my houses to pay for the treatments in many hospitals for him. I told him that I would sacrifice everything for him, even though I knew he was incurable. As a mother, I was willing to do so… One day, he (my son) held my hands and told me: 'I know you have done everything you could, I really appreciate it. After I die, please do save some money and look after yourself well… (Li)*

Apart from emphasising daily interactions, the dying moment, especially tears and the crying of the dying person were also highlighted by a few people in their narratives to capture the care

and love indicated by the dying person, showing their strong interdependence with the deceased even at the dying moment:

> *… he (grandad) didn't want to go (die) as he still couldn't leave grandma, me and other family members behind. Obviously, he was too sick to do or say anything, so he converted all of his love and concerns for the family into two lines of tears. It was my first time I had seen him crying, but I know it was the truest love from his heart. The two lines of tears were full of his love to us… (Qian)*

In some cases, even unkind attitudes and behaviour of the dying person were also interpreted as a special strategy to show his or her concerns about the bereaved person and other family members, thereby showing the strong sense of interdependence. For example, a wife interpreted her husband's anger as his way of showing care and kindness:

> *At the time, I had to look after my husband, my son and my father, who were all hospitalised. Often, I had to rush to go between different floors and rooms to check if all of them were alright… My husband was angry with me, he said he wouldn't stay in the hospital to have the treatment anymore and he did so. I know he wasn't really angry with me, but was worried about me and my health… (Wang)*

Summary: dying in the family context

Dying was largely considered difficult by the Chinese narrators, because the often prolonged and deteriorating process could not only afflict their loved one's life quality, for it was also likely to undermine severely their taken-for-granted interdependence in lives. As shown in the accounts, the family was generally the primary source providing mutual support and the sense of belonging. In facing the dying of their loved one, they experienced various difficulties in maintaining and developing the family-based reciprocity with the dying person and other members. Moreover, due to the significance of interdependence in their sense of themselves and the priority of family

in their daily lives, many of them still tried to provide support to and receive care and love from the dying person. In so doing, they were able to recover the sense of the reciprocity, which was primarily constructed and maintained by sharing support and responsibilities in the family context. Furthermore, since interpersonal relationships and solidarity of the family as a whole were profoundly emphasised in dying, the agency of individuals, including the dying and the bereaved person, could be undermined or even neglected for the sake of prioritising the collective values of family, including social harmony, as shown above.

Making sense of death

As explained above, Chinese culture has long placed emphasis on life rather than death in relation to the interests and obligations of the living, which include interpersonal harmony (Bedford and Hwang, 2003; Qi, 2017). Death, as an unavoidable event in life, is also largely shaped by cultural values in relation to expectations of a good death. Traditionally in China, an ideal death is often associated with a peaceful transition of a beloved family member, who has completed his or her social obligations, especially familial obligations, and has reached old age (Mak, 2007). Accordingly, in the Chinese narratives, these bereaved people conveyed their own perceptions of death, strongly reflecting the above expectations of a good death. In the following, the discussion focuses on how these bereaved people made sense of their loved one's death as bad with reference to the expectations of 'a smooth and peaceful death', 'familial obligations' and 'interdependence'. I also discuss their attempts to 'recover goodness from death'.

A smooth and peaceful death

As discussed above, a good death in China can be defined as a smooth and peaceful transition involving engagements with family members. Conversely, if the death was sudden and/or even violent, it could be hard to make sense of and accept not only by the bereaved people themselves but also by other family members. For example, when facing her brother's sudden and violent death, one woman was shattered not only by the death, but also by concerns for how her parents would react:

I was the first family member who was called to the accident scene as we were living in the same city. When I saw the bloody body of my brother lying next to the car, I was totally knocked down. I was just knocked down by the shock on the roadside and couldn't figure out what happened. All I could think was how my parents were gonna do… (Hefei)

In addition, the badness of a sudden death could be interpreted by bereaved people in relation to not enabling them to say goodbye to the dying:

I couldn't believe and accept that he (grandad) passed away so suddenly. I was still thinking how we could tell him how much we love him. Even if he was unable to talk back, it would be enough if he could hear us. I was really unprepared! Why could he leave us so suddenly? Why didn't he show us any signs beforehand?... (Qian)

Family obligations

Living in relational and family-centred Chinese society (see the section 'before death'), bereaved people reported developing intimate relationships with their loved one by exchanging support and sharing obligations in the family context. The death of an intimate family member was, thus, often described as bad by these narrators in relation to losing a significant source of family obligations, including both providing and receiving support from the deceased.

Some bereaved narrators found the death of their loved one hard to accept due to their sense of obligation to the deceased. In particular, the social expectations of filial piety can be deeply embedded within the relationships between the younger and older generations in China. Hence, the death of an elderly family member can be considered as bad in relation to the bereaved no longer being able to practice their obligations of filial piety:

It happened just several months before I started my job. Grandad had devoted himself to my study, especially when I was at uni. I had made plans to buy good clothes and nice food and take him to travel around as long as I got paid.

Why couldn't he wait for me so that I could practise my filial piety with him. (Tao)

Meanwhile, due to the sense of mutual obligations, the deceased was also expected to provide support to the bereaved person and other family members. As such, some interviews found the dying of their loved one was 'bad' in a sense that the dying person failed to fulfil his/her obligations:

… when he was lying there, I held his hands and shouted at him, 'how could you be so irresponsible? I have scarified a lot for taking care of you… I haven't been to work for nearly a year; and I am even thinking of quitting my job and doing some exercise to get fitter, so that I can take full responsibility for looking after you in case one day you may not be able to move at all in bed. You are really heartless.' (Wang)

Sometimes, being irresponsible could also be linked to the deceased person's obligations to the whole family:

He was the only son in the whole family, but he couldn't even leave a child to continue the family… He is irresponsible. How could he leave us so young! (Hefei)

Interdependence

Based on mutual responsibilities within the family, as mentioned above, the bereaved person was likely to develop a strong sense of interdependence with their loved one as part of their own identity. Hence, losing a person as a primary source of interdependent support could greatly disrupt the bereaved person's everyday life as well as the sense of themselves. For example, a daughter described her father's death as the collapsing of her whole life, a common phrase in China to describe something unexpected and devastating:

…It also caused me to feel devastated and made it hard for me to adapt to reality after he passed away. I became troubled in both my outer and inner life, and it felt as though 'the whole world had collapsed'. It was not only the sorrow of losing a family member, but also the end of a life style that I loved and was loved by him… Since the moment when he left, it means I had lost my protection by him. It is like I fell into a heavy rain from a well-protected castle. (Chang)

Recovering goodness from death

Whilst many of the narrators tended to define the nature of their loved one's death as bad by referring to the social expectations of a good death, they also reported how they tried to justify their loss by referring to the cultural definition of the latter form as well as their personal experiences.

As explained above, the social expectations of a good death are strongly associated with a sense of a peaceful and meaningful completion of life (Mak, 2007). Accordingly, the bereaved person was likely to find comfort from a death involving minimal pain for their loved one, especially when compared with other cases:

To be honest, I tried to comfort myself by thinking it was probably a good ending for him. The doctor told me patients like my dad who have small-cell lung cancer would die in a very painful way due to organ failure. The good thing is that my dad passed away before reaching that stage. (Sun)

If the deceased had reached old age and had built up a large and harmonious family, the death was more likely to be considered good. In traditional culture, such deaths are often paired with weddings in order to highlight the positivity to the family, being described as 'red and white celebratory events' (红白喜事). As a consequence, the age and the family status were emphasised in some accounts to address the deceased person's achievements and further, to

recover the goodness from his or her death. For example, a husband in his 90s considered his wife's death in a positive sense:

> *…. She died in her late 80s, a pretty good age. No one can be immortal, so it was just a natural ending for her. In addition, she had been blessed with children and grandchildren in the family… she died in the presence of our son, daughter and grandchildren. All of us were at her bedside. That was a good ending … (Wu)*

As mentioned above, the bereaved people tended to justify a death as involving less suffering and being more meaningful from the perspective of the deceased. In addition, some bereaved people also addressed their own as well as other family members' contributions to the good death, thus reflecting the obligations and solidarity in the family:

> *He (my husband) had died in a pretty good way. I don't feel any regrets about his death as I had done my best for him. I think it was worth sacrificing for him that much, as he died in peace… The children and grandchildren have been great. They brought meaning to my husband's death. Without them, I wouldn't have been able to feel what family is… (Ge)*

Moreover, apart from drawing on the traditional values of family harmony, spirituality and religion were also reported by one bereaved person in making sense of and even romanticising the death of his grandfather:

> *I believed that heavenly god (a superior being in Chinese folk culture) also felt sad for my grandad. On the day of the funeral, it was raining with thunder and lighting. It seems heaven was saying farewell to him or crying for him. I told grandad, 'even god is mourning for you, you must be resting in peace now. All the suffering and sadness are all gone now'. (Qian)*

Sometimes, personal life experiences could also provide a point of reference for the bereaved person to justify their loved one's death. For example, one son found his own experience of being in hospital with uraemia helpful in understanding his father's sudden death:

I was in hospital on renal dialysis for over nine years. It is just really painful and risky. So far, I have seen many people die next to me... The hospital I am staying in now is not supportive at all, they only provide good care to us if there is an inspection from the government. In addition, the relationships between patients aren't that great either; they don't really help each other, even when someone next to them is dying. Because of this experience, I am really relieved that my dad didn't need to go through such processes. (Wan)

Summary: recovering a harmonious death

As shown in the accounts above, the narrators' perceptions of their loved one's death were profoundly shaped by the cultural emphasis on harmony, not only in the physical conditions of death, but also in social, especially family, contexts. Apart from the badness caused by the painful and/or violent nature of the death itself, the death of a family member could greatly threaten the stability and harmony in family, the primary source for mutual obligations and interdependent support. In facing such death, these bereaved people tended to emphasise the smoothness of the dying process and the family values by largely drawing on traditional expectations of a good death, although supernaturalism and personal experiences could shape their perceptions of death to some extent. In so doing, the death of their loved one could largely be recovered as harmonious and integrated into their ongoing lives.

2.3 After death

Living in a relational and family-centred society, the loss of someone close, especially a family member, has been reported to challenge bereaved people's sense of interdependence within the family context. Following loss of a loved one as an important source for exchanging support and seeking meaning, the bereaved people were likely to be faced with how to deal with various impacts from loss and how to recover meaning in their ongoing lives. As reported above, these bereaved people's lives were largely built around their family and they tended to justify their

experiences as well as themselves by referring to their identity as part of it. This section analyses Chinese bereaved people's reported experiences after their loss in relation to how they were motivated to recover interdependence and family solidarity as primary meanings in their everyday lives. Furthermore, considering motivation as a social construction reflecting available social scripts as resources for meaning-making, the discussion also pays attention to some alternative discourses that were adopted by some bereaved people to reconstruct their sense of meaning either within or outside of the family. To these ends, I consider these Chinese bereaved people's experiences with reference to 'dealing with the impact of death' and 'dealing with loss'.

Dealing with the impact of death

As explained above, the deceased was predominantly reported as a significant source for developing interdependence and sharing support and responsibilities in various aspects of the bereaved person's daily life, including the emotional, physical, practical, financial, social and familial domains. By identifying issues and changes in the above aspects, I aim to illustrate how the loss of an important person for interdependent support can challenge bereaved people's daily lives, their meaning in life and their identities.

Emotional impact

As conveyed by the narratives, loss of a loved one was associated with distressing emotions, such as, shock, numbness and sadness. Furthermore, the distress was often addressed by the bereaved people in relation to the emotional impact not only on themselves, but also other family members, thus showing their strong concerns for the family. For example, apart from reporting his own sadness, a son also highlighted his concerns about his mother's sorrow:

> *I was really sad (over the death of my dad), but I wasn't the saddest. My mum was the one. She had been with dad for more than half of her entire life, so how possibly could she face the loss? Sometimes, she said she didn't want to*

live either, no matter how much I tried to comfort her. It was really heart-breaking to see her being so desperate. (Sun)

Apart from the sorrow of death itself, the bereaved person might also experience emotional disruption due to the reciprocal relationship with the deceased. As a support provider, many bereaved people reported having developed strong feelings of regret and guilt for not being able to fulfil their obligations to the deceased before death:

I was told that grandad had been waiting for me for a long period before he actually passed away. I feel extremely guilty about this. I am not a good grandson. When he was dying, I didn't talk to him properly, didn't feed him and even didn't stay with him for long. I didn't accompany him to the end of his life, I feel so ashamed to be his grandson. He passed away alone, I really really feel guilty and regretful about this… (Qian)

Some bereaved people considered their loved one's death as irresponsible in terms of failing to fulfil his or her obligations to the bereaved person as well as the family. They also reported their frustration and even anger at the irresponsibility of the deceased, showing their preoccupation with reciprocity:

He left suddenly with very little time for us to prepare. I just feel angry with him as he was too selfish. My mum and I and many other people in the family had devoted so much to him, but at the end he left by himself, without considering how desperate and heartbroken we would be. (Sun)

Furthermore, the emotional impact could also be attributed to the bereaved person's relationships with other people, not only in the family, but also in wider social circles. Due to concerns for their self-presentation to others, the bereaved person in China might suppress their distressing emotions to maintain harmonious relationships with others. When facing the death of a loved one in the family, some bereaved people reported how they and their family had a tendency to manage or conceal their negative emotions so as not to upset other family members, thus showing priority being given to others rather than themselves:

All of us in the family tried to hide the shock (of my brother' death) in our own hearts. No one really talks about it in the family, we just pretend nothing happened. By doing so, we try not to cause pain to anyone in the family. It is too painful to talk about... (Hefei)

As a social being, the bereaved person might also feel pressure to restrain their emotional expression in different social conditions to preserve harmony with others. For example, a son reported his determination to hide his sorrow for the sake of better relationships with his roommates:

Especially in the first year after losing my mum, I used to struggle a lot with my emotions, such as sadness and numbness. Nonetheless, I never talked about my feelings with my flat mates; the five guys who I was sharing with. There are two reasons: first, I didn't want to embarrass them as they might not know how to react to me and my emotions; second, I didn't want them to sympathise with me as I wanted real friendship rather than sympathy. (Chao)

Physical impact

Apart from the emotional impact, some narratives emphasised the physical impact to highlight the distressing and shocking nature of the death. When reporting the declining health conditions attributed to the death of their loved one, some bereaved people conveyed their sense of dependence on the deceased for support. For example, a mother, who fell ill after her first son's death, reported her health conditions to address her loss of support from him:

I was knocked down… I had been sick in bed for a while since my eldest son's funeral. I was too ill to even get out of the bed. I thought if he was still alive, he would definitely take me to the hospital and look after me well… (Li)

Moreover, some bereaved people reported paying more attention to the impact of the death on the health of other family members rather than themselves, thus reflecting strong identification with the family.

… my mother was crying every day. My mother kept mourning for many years. Since then, my mother started to suffer from hypertension. We were very worried about her health… (Ang)

Practical impact

The loss of a loved one, especially someone who had been an important source of day-to-day support, was likely to cause difficulties in the bereaved person's ongoing life. As reported by a wife who was living alone, the lack of support even for small practical things was threatening to undermine her everyday life:

Once I fell over in the shower, I had to crawl out of the toilet by myself. I struggled a lot and finally I got to my room. I had some analgesic plasters in the drawer, so I tried to apply the plaster to my lower back. It was too far to reach by hand and my back was really painful, I remember I suddenly started to cry and blame my husband, 'why can't you be here? If you were here, I wouldn't struggle so much with such a simple task.'. (Shi)

Sometimes, the bereaved people might find that death forced them to deal with some practical issues that used to be outside their responsibilities:

He used to deal with all the stuff with the councils, but now I have to write applications to claim benefits. I have never done that before, I really have no clue about how to fill in the forms. Just a headache… (Wang)

Financial impact

If the deceased was an important source of income in the family, the loss could greatly challenge the family's financial stability. As reported by some interviewees, they were faced with financial difficulties in their everyday lives following their loss:

Before my husband and I both worked, so we had some savings to pay for the treatment of our son's uremia. However, after he was diagnosed with cancer, especially after he died, I had to take over all the responsibilities for earning money to pay the hospital for our son and the bills for the house… I have got two jobs now, both day and night. I have to work … (Wang)

In some cases, loss could also involve economic disputes, accompanied by arguments and conflict with family members and others:

The first thing that came out was financial issues. My father left suddenly, he didn't prepare anything for his property and business. We had a family factory and employed friends and relatives in the factory. Since then, they started to argue about how to divide the money. Some of the uncles, who used to treat me well, believed they contributed a lot to the factory and wanted to take over my father's estates. There were also some malevolent people, who provoked me into taking over bequests of my brothers. Families of my sisters in law also came forward to express their needs. (Chang)

As a result, the bereaved daughter above reported that the economic dispute threatened the family unit as a whole as well as changing her perception of family and social relationships:

On the one hand, my father was not buried yet; on the other hand, the whole family was already a mess… I was totally shocked that relatives and friends turned into strangers just in one night. I started to doubt what I used to believe in and started to feel everyone around was hard to understand. I changed from the kind of person who trusted everyone to another kind of person who does not trust anyone. (Chang)

Familial impact

As mentioned above, economic disputes among family members were likely to undermine family relationships following the loss of a loved one who was also important for the family in an

economic sense. Furthermore, the changes to family structures and relationships were not only attributed to financial issues, but in fact more commonly due the reality of losing an important member of the family.

The absence of the deceased could strongly reshape the family structures, in which he or she used to be a significant part. For example, a man who lost three close family members reported a huge discrepancy between the experience of family meals before and after his loss to highlight the shock and change to the family dynamics and structures:

> *Before, all seven people in the family were around the table and there was a lively atmosphere, but then it became very desolate as just four of us were left. We were only four people at the table, each person sat on one side. It was very upsetting and lonely. (Ma)*

In addition, losing a family member might not only affect the individual family members, for it could also reshape family relationships in both positive and negative ways. Due to the strong sense of interdependence and responsibility among family members, some bereaved people emphasised how they made more effort to support their family members and maintain family relationships. For example, the son who was suffering from uraemia tried to support his mother by starting to pay attention to his own health condition in order to live longer for her:

> *I was just concerned for my mum who lost four loved ones in five years. Her husband, parents and her bigger brother died consecutively in the last five years. It has been too shocking to her. If I died as well, she would be totally knocked down. That's why I decided to look after myself now. When my dad was alive, I used to hate going to hospitals; however, now I am trying to go as much as I can to maintain my health for my mum. (Wan)*

The bereaved person was also likely to receive support from other family members, thus enhancing his or her relationships with them:

> *My children and grandchildren have been great. I moved to live with my son after my husband passed away, which became a great help in my life… my*

grandson has been very kind and supportive to me, he always comes to visit me; especially after he got married, I am really enjoying seeing him and his wife… my daughter was concerned that I might be alone as my son's family is out working all day. She booked a holiday and paid for everything, we had a week-long trip to Yangzhou, I really enjoyed it and took many photos … (Ge)

However, sometimes the sense of mutual responsibilities could also undermine family relationships. For example, after losing her father, a daughter experienced difficulties in interacting with her mother due to concerns with reciprocity:

My mother is not reliable as she used to be protected by my father. She is not able to make decisions, and even needs my assistance sometimes… we just don't know how to help each other, because we both used to be dependent on dad. We just literally can't. That is really difficult between mum and me. (Chang)

Social impact

As someone close in life, the deceased can play a significant role in the bereaved person's social life before death. Hence, the loss of such a loved one could challenge the bereaved person's social circles:

He (my husband) was a very sociable person, so we used to have lots of friends coming and going all the time. But since he died, it seems everyone just disappeared suddenly… (Wang)

As shown above, these bereaved people might have to face their social lives being reduced; however, they could also receive support from their social circles as a consequence of their loss:

I have great friends. They always try to invite me to do some social activities as they know when I am always home alone… I am going to a music workshop three times a week with old friends to practice some local operas. They always

joke that I can't make the workshop, I have to ask them for leave. (laugh).

(Shi)

Summary: facing an impact from various life aspects

The death of a loved one was inevitably distressing and disruptive to various aspects of the bereaved person's ongoing life, from the emotional to the social. Apart from the shocking and painful nature of death, the impact was largely associated with his or her relationships with the deceased as well as others in relation to exchanging support and sharing responsibilities. Whilst the impact was largely negative due to losing a loved one as an important source of interdependence in different aspects of life, some positive changes were also found in some bereaved people's family/social lives. Furthermore, the changes might occur at different points in time following the loss and thus could leave the bereaved person facing the question how to deal with the impact in his or her ongoing life.

Dealing with loss

In facing the loss of a significant source of reciprocal support and the sense of interdependence, the bereaved person is also faced with how to deal with the impact and consequences of the loss in order to continue his or her. As conveyed in the narratives, the bereaved person's life after loss involved redefining the reciprocal relationship with the deceased and others, as well as, recovering/reshaping their sense of meaning as an independent /relational being. In order to capture how they achieved these, this section interprets the narratives by looking at 'redefining relationships' and 'recovering meaning.

Redefining relationships

As discussed so far, the intimate and reciprocal relationship developed with their loved one before the death was largely integrated into the bereaved person's everyday life, thereby providing a sense of security for interdependent support in various aspects of life. When

experiencing loss, the bereaved person had to face various challenges and changes in their ongoing life due to losing their loved one as an important source of interdependent support and the sense of themselves. Hence, he or she needed to redefine his or her relationship with the deceased in order to reintegrate this into their ongoing lives. In addition, the bereaved person's family and social relationships might be strongly affected by the loss, which could also impact on the bereaved person's life in various ways. As a result, bereaved people reported that they were often faced with the task of how to redefine relationships with family members and others from their social circle. That is, dealing with loss, in addition to recovering and maintaining 'continuing bonds with the deceased', also involved redefining family and social relationships (Riches and Dawson?).

Continuing bonds with the deceased

As an important source of exchanging support and maintaining their interdependent being, the deceased could continue playing an important role in the bereaved person's ongoing life. As shown in the accounts, bereaved people reported their ongoing interactions with the deceased in different ways by drawing on different resources. To illustrate this process, I first explore how continuing bonds were recovered and redefined within the Chinese context; second, I argue that these bonds could be double-edged; and last, I illustrate how the bonds could be integrated into the bereaved person's ongoing life.

First, living in a traditional but fast-changing society that has been largely shaped by collective values, many of the bereaved people reported their ongoing relationship with the deceased in a way that reflected the complexity and dynamics of the broad social background. As shown above, usually the bereaved person's everyday life before loss was largely involved with the deceased through a strong sense of interdependence. Hence, in ongoing lives following the loss, as reported by some bereaved people, they still could sense the presence of the deceased in relation to sharing support and responsibilities:

> *For a very long time, I felt he was still around. When sitting in the living room, I still felt he was lying in bed. When walking into the bedroom, it seemed he*

was still smoking on the balcony. At the moment when I knocked on the door after school, I believed he would come to open the door with his smile. He liked calling me "my little daughter", so his voice was around in the house for a long time. (Chang)

Furthermore, the ongoing sense of reciprocity with the deceased was sometimes linked to the traditional ideas of ancestor veneration. As illustrated above, traditional family relationships in China can be continued between living and deceased family members through mutual support (Ding, 2013; O'Connor, 2016). That is to say, living family members are obligated to offer sacrifices to and are believed to receive blessings from the spirits of deceased family members, especially those from older generations (O'Connor, 2016). Accordingly, some interviewees interpreted the deceased elderly family member as an ancestral figure who was eligible to respond and provide support to the living family members:

I sometimes try to communicate with him (my grandad) by telling him that all of us, including his children and grandchildren, will be good to him and to everyone else in the family. That's why I ask him to bless grandma to let her have a healthy and long life, as well as to bless all of us with a healthy and happy life. (Tao)

Whilst the vast majority of bereaved people in China draw on ancestral ideas, some people's narratives showed ambivalent attitudes towards the conventional script, particularly in relation to spirituality and religious aspects. As aforementioned, Chinese society experienced a period of time when many traditional norms and values, including the spiritual bonds with the ancestors and religious beliefs, were categorised as 'feudal superstition' and therefore, largely suppressed by the authorities (see the background section in this chapter). Despite these traditions having been gradually restored nowadays, as the narratives convey, some bereaved people might still feel a need to justify their 'spiritualised' bonds with their loved one:

People from my generation are not supposed to believe in spirituality and religion, but I started to believe that there is another world (for spirits). I

completed all the rituals step by step very carefully, because I wished my dad could have a better life in the other world. (Sun)

As shown above, spiritual beliefs and rituals could be used by the bereaved person to understand and redefine the relationship and interactions with their deceased loved one. Furthermore, as documented in Chapter 4, 5 and elsewhere (Valentine, 2007a; 2010; Watson and Rawski, 1990), the funeral is often considered a significant transition for the spirit of the deceased and involves different forms of rituals and customs. However, due to the secularisation in China, these bereaved Chinese people predominantly reported the funeral as a highly simplified and secularised procedure following death without strong engagement with rituals and religion. During the interviews, I asked questions about the details of these bereaved people's experiences of the funeral; however, many of them did not highlight it as an important part of their bereavement experiences. For example, as reported by a wife who was asked about the funeral of her husband:

For me, the funeral gave me a chance to say goodbye to my husband, but the funeral itself was quite simple and straightforward. I didn't particularly feel anything spiritual ... We just follow what anyone else does for the funeral by following the set procedures. It was held in the local crematorium, and many relatives and friends attended. I think it was just what a funeral is supposed to be. (Ge)

Apart from the above relationships that were largely shaped by traditional norms and the broad social background, continuing bonds could also be maintained in more individualised forms, thus going against traditional customs. As reported, some bereaved people, especially those from the younger generation, chose to adopt their own ways of maintaining the relationship with their loved one, rather than following the traditions:

People in the family were going to burn all of grandad's belongings and clothes, because it has long been a tradition to do so. It is believed the deceased person could receive them. However, I found a leather jacket in the bag. I remember he bought it for me, but I didn't wear it for long as it was too

big. I returned it to him, and since then he had been wearing it often. The jacket is a memory shared between grandad and me, whenever I see it I can always feel grandad… I decided to keep it for the memory no matter how much other people in the family told me it was not good. (Qian)

Second, by maintaining the ongoing relationship with their loved one, some bereaved people's narratives showed how bonds could be double-edged, particularly in relation to the sense of interdependence. That is, whilst the bereaved person tended to continue reciprocity with the deceased, the discrepancy between such interactive and interdependent bonds and the physical absence of the deceased was often reported as a poignant reminder of loss. Furthermore, double-edged bonds could be interpreted from the perspectives of both the bereaved person him/herself as well as the deceased, showing his or her strong sense of shared responsibility with his or her loved one. As conveyed by some, their bonds with the deceased could be challenged by the stark reality of the loss:

After my eldest son passed away, I still kept making steam buns for him as I thought he would come to collect these buns… One night, I dreamt about him. In the dream, he was bringing me some medicines and supplements for my knees. I clearly remember he asked to open the door for him as he was holding bags and boxes in both hands. Suddenly, I woke up, so I ran to the door immediately even without wearing slippers. I opened the door, ran into the street and shouted, 'where are you?'. It was already midnight and very cold. I fell to the ground and started to cry loudly. (Li)

Some people emphasised the negative impact of death on the deceased person's bonds with the bereaved:

I felt awkward about the fact that dad's ashes are buried alone in the cemetery. It is so cold and unfamiliar; he must feel lonely because we are not with him now. Even when he was ill, we still stayed by him in the hospital every day. How could he feel now without being accompanied by us? (Chang)

Third, whilst the bereaved person might perceive the continuing bond with their loved one in diverse and sometimes contrasting ways, he or she was likely to live with and thus, integrate the relationship into his or her ongoing life. As someone who had largely shaped his or her everyday life, the deceased could continue to remain a significant part of and further shape the bereaved person's ongoing life to maintain an intimate and interdependent relationship:

> *I can never forget how much he (grandad) loved me; rather, I always think of his love and support that he gave to me, like every single day… even though he is living in another world, I still try to think of him and love him. To be honest, I just want to keep practising filial piety with him. Meanwhile, what he taught is giving me instructions in my life now. (Tao)*

As shown by all the accounts in this section, bereaved people in China would appear to recover and preserve the interdependent relationship with their loved one by sharing support and responsibilities in their ongoing lives. Whilst the relationships have been greatly shaped by the traditional norms of ancestral and spiritual beliefs, the secularisation promoted by political decisions and growing individual values can also impact the nature of these relationships. Furthermore, due to the strong sense of interdependence with the deceased, the bereaved may not only find comfort and meaning, but also experience distress from maintaining the relationship.

Family relationships

Following the loss of a family member, as explained in the section on 'family impact', the family structure and dynamics could be substantially reshaped. When facing the changing picture of the family, the bereaved person would need to redefine relationships with other family members in order to relocate themselves in the family. Furthermore, considering family as the primary institute for sharing support and responsibilities, the bereaved people from the narratives tended to re-evaluate their relationships with other family members in order to recover their sense of interdependence in their ongoing lives.

As shown above, losing a family member was likely to reinforce the family solidary, whereby the remaining members, including the bereaved person, might experience increased mutual support. Through this, the bereaved person was able to rediscover relief, security and more importantly, the sense of being an interdependent being. As reported by a bereaved wife, whose son was diagnosed with uraemia:

> *Since he (my husband) died, my little brother's family took over the responsibility for taking care of my son's daily life. My brother is good as we are siblings, but I have to say my sister-in-law is brilliant. She devotes even more time than my brother to my son. Unfortunately, my older brother's wife isn't that great, but my brother always tries to give me his savings as he knows I need money for my son's treatment. I am so glad I have a great family… Since his father died, he changed a lot. Now he is more caring and supportive to me. I told him, 'now we have to rely on each other'. (Wang)*

Furthermore, due to the interdependence shared in the family, some bereaved people tended to give priority to other family members rather than themselves, in relation to exchanging support. As some narrators, especially parents, conveyed, they had hesitated to receive increased support from their children as they did not want to add to the burden of their family life. They would consider not asking for support as a means of supporting their children and thus, reinforce their sense of responsibility towards the family:

> *Normally, I don't call them (children) as they all are working and have their own children and family to look after. So, if I don't have anything seriously bad, I don't want to brother them. They all have cars, they can come to help me easily. However, as a powerless elderly person, I think not burdening them is the best support for them. (Shi)*

Apart from the enhanced support from the family, the bereaved person might also experience cooling off of relationships with some members. That is, when facing the changing family dynamics following the loss, the bereaved person might re-evaluate his or her family relationships regarding the quality and quantity of the support shared with other family members.

For instance, he or she might place a distance between themselves and certain family members, who he or she believes to have fail to fulfil their obligations of exchanging support. Since family is considered as the primary source for support, bereaved people might face emotional distress and actual difficulties in their ongoing lives due to undermined interdependence in the family. For example, a mother became estranged from her daughter, who was her only living child:

> *I have a daughter who I devoted a lot to bringing up… She (daughter) is busy with her own family, so I can't really rely on her. Sometimes I think people differ a lot, so do my children. My daughter doesn't care for me a lot and that makes me sad… Sometime I wish I could die in a sudden death, so that I don't need to ask her for help. (Li)*

As shown above, the family relationships following loss were predominantly redefined based on the interdependence and solidarity shared between the members. In relation to the primality of family in Chinese people's everyday lives, the enhanced reciprocity with family members could recover and even strengthen the bereaved person's sense of meaning and their identities. Conversely, reduced or lack of exchange of support and care might undermine the bereaved person's motivation in the ongoing life.

Social relationships

As a social being, especially when living a highly relational society, a bereaved person is likely to redefine his or her relationships with others from the broader social circles beyond the family. As such, the discussion looks at how the bereaved person tried to face and to make sense of their social relationships in individual networks as well as the broader community.

As conveyed in the section of 'social impact', the bereaved person was likely to experience both enhanced and reduced relationships with others in his or her personal networks. As revealed by some in the narratives, the personal networks, such as friends and neighbours, were considered as alternative sources for seeking meaning and redefining their identities. However, these social relationships might have limited and temporary impact on the bereaved person in the ongoing

life. For example, the mother mentioned above, who received little support from her only living child (daughter) said:

> *All of my friends and neighbors know I am a good person, so they are happy to spend time with me. They often invite to go to the park with them for chatting or playing card games. Before I used to feel depressed at home alone, but I have changed a lot because of them. Now, I spend the most times of the day with them outside… I am enjoying life now, but I don't want to think about the future, especially if I fell ill. These friends have been great, but they are only friends, not my family. (Li)*

Apart from the personal networks, a few bereaved people, especially those who came from small communities, also reported their commitments of reshaping their relationships with the broader community on certain occasions, such as during the funeral and rituals. As explained at the beginning of the chapter, self-presentation is a strong concern for Chinese people in their social relationships (Qi, 2017). Hence, the bereaved might try to reshape their self-presentation to others in the broader communities in order to show and justify their position in the community:

> *Grandad's funeral was a grand one. We hired an orchestra of over 40 musicians and also arranged over 50 luxury cars following the hearse… Grandad used to be an important man in the whole village, being well respected, that's why we wanted to let people know he had educated his children and grandchildren well and we all have a very good life now. (Tao)*

As shown above, following the loss of a loved one, the bereaved person was likely to experience and redefine changing social relationships, not only with individuals, but also with broader communities. Furthermore, the support and admiration from the social circles might lead to enhancement of the bereaved person's sense of a relational being and provide temporary rather than long-term meaning to their ongoing lives, due to the primacy of the family in their everyday lives.

Summary: relationships in ongoing life

By interpreting reported experiences with different people in bereavement, this section has illustrated how bereaved people from the Chinese narratives would appear to recover and maintain interdependent relationships and their relational being after the death of their loved one. The deceased, though physically absent, very often maintained as an interdependent figure, as well as being given agency and power to interact with and even impact on the bereaved person's life. Whilst the continuing relationship with the deceased is profoundly shaped by traditional ideas of ancestor veneration and spirituality, the secularisation and the growing sense of individuality might also shape the form of the bonds. In so doing, the deceased is likely to be integrated into the bereaved person's ongoing life, in which the sense of interdependence can be both recovered and challenged by the continuing bonds. Apart from the relationships with the deceased, the bereaved person also faces changing family and social relationships. Considering the family relationships as the primary source for interdependent support in everyday life, he or she will most likely identify more fundamental and long-term meaning from the family rather than broader social relationships, although social relationships were also considered as alternative sources of meaning in some people's narratives. Through these recovered and redefined relationships, the bereaved person would appear to be able to bring back meaning into their ongoing lives.

Recovering meaning

As mentioned above, by redefining the relationships with the different parties, the bereaved person was motivated to recover the sense of interdependence and justify his or her relational being by drawing on various discourses available in Chinese society. To these ends, he or she sought meaning from a range of sources. In order to present a comprehensive picture of meaning and motivation of these bereaved Chinese, I consider the various socio-cultural discourses related to 'family values', 'religion' and 'individual values'. In so doing, I aim to illustrate further how motivation following bereavement is reconstructed in the Chinese context.

Family values

As evidenced above, family in China has long been centralised in people's everyday lives, providing various resources, not only for sharing support and care, but also for defining themselves and justifying their everyday experiences (Park and Chesla, 2007; Slote and De Vos, 1998). Accordingly, family was predominantly reported by bereaved people as the primary source of meaning, where reciprocity and interdependence with the deceased and other family members were seen as crucial. As aforementioned, the bereaved person tended to maintain an ongoing relationship with their loved one and often integrated the deceased into their ongoing lives by drawing on these family values. As such, the bereaved person could recover the sense of reciprocity and family bonds with the deceased, which could have an ongoing impact on the bereaved person's life. As conveyed by a sister:

> *We love him as a dear brother, a dear son and a dear uncle, so all of us (i.e. the narrator, their parents and her child) will live with him… the love we have for him is our goal for life now. (Hefei)*

Apart from maintaining bonds with the deceased, the bereaved person also tried to redefine the relationships with other family members in order to reposition him/herself, so as to recover his or her interdependence within the family. As reported by some, the determination to maintain shared support and mutual responsibilities with living family members profoundly motivated them to carry on with their ongoing lives. For example,

> *I was so devastated at the beginning that I was even thinking of committing suicide to follow my brother. However, my son became the biggest motivation for my life. He is still quite little, so I have to pull myself together to support him… whenever I feel sad or hopeless, I always try to think about my parents. I am the only child for them now, so I have to take on the responsibility to look after them. (Hefei)*

Furthermore, given the significance of family for meaning making in bereavement, a few bereaved people, who had broken family ties following their loss, showed their strong

determination to restore their family and thus, recover the sense of meaning as an interdependent family member. For example, a man who lost four close family members reported how the motivation to find his missing son drove his life:

> *During the last 21 years, I have tried my best to maintain the family and to find my lost son, then one day the family would be complete. It doesn't matter how much I have thrived, as long as I could find my little son to make the family complete… After 21 years passed, I found my son and finally got my family back! (Ma)*

Religion

Whilst family values were the primary discourses for making sense of and justifying their ongoing lives, some bereaved people also reported other available social scripts, such as religious beliefs, to recover meaning in their bereavement. As an alternative source, religion could provide the bereaved person with explanations of their experiences and help them recover their own identities. Furthermore, given the atheistic background in China, whilst religion is no longer embedded in the majority of the population, the more tolerant policies towards it have allowed more opportunities for Chinese people to come across religious and spiritual beliefs (Moise, 2013). As a result, some people reported their experiences with religion in their lives. For example, a daughter considered Christianity as a substitute for family support:

> *… I had no one in my family to rely on… this girl is like my bigger sister, I chose to trust her, and she introduced Christianity to me. Since then, I became a Christian. I had tried to re-believe, re-understand and re-forgive everything including the things that hurt me a lot. I transformed from an immature and extreme girl to a person with more acceptable values. I even felt myself become more mature and more grateful. Also, I understand challenges are not always bad things. (Chang)*

As shown above, religion beliefs could shape the bereaved person's meaning in their ongoing life, although, as stressed above, family values were predominant for meaning making.

Individual values

Apart from the norms from family and religion, individual values and personal life experience could also reshape the bereaved person's sense of meaning. As explained before, individualism is growing in Chinese society, especially among the younger generations. Hence, some young bereaved narrators highlighted individual matters in their ongoing lives:

> *I started my business several years ago, it has been quite successful. So, my life now is largely made up of how to run and develop my business. (Chao)*

Sometimes, personal experience might also lead to the bereaved person developing a strong sense of individuality. For example, the son, who was diagnosed with uraemia, addressed his concern for himself:

> *If you think about my condition, I am struggling with uremia, I don't even know how long I can live for. That's why I have to use up all of my energies to deal with my own issues, not much can be left for the family. (Wan)*

Whilst both accounts above have shown an emphasis on individual aspects of the narrators' lives, they still conveyed how family was the primary source of meaning in their lives:

> *Business and making money are important in my life, but the most important for me is to stay with and love my family. My dad has sacrificed a lot for me and my partner has supported me a lot so far, I will do my best to love them in my life. (Chao)*

> *To be honest, I am not afraid of death at all as I may die anytime. However, I am trying to live a healthier life for mum. I told myself, I can't die as I still need to support her. (Wan)*

Summary: relationships in ongoing life

As discussed in this section, family was the primary source of meaning, whereby family values of interdependence and solidarity were adopted to make sense of everyday experiences in bereavement. However, ideas related to religion and individualism, were also reported as alternative sources of meaning for the bereaved person. By prioritising relationships with both the deceased and living family members in their ongoing lives, these bereaved people conveyed how they recovered their sense of interdependence and being part of the family.

3. Conclusion

Bereavement in China would appear to be generally shaped by the sense of interdependence and being part of the family, which are based on the mutual support and responsibilities shared between family members. As shown in the accounts of these bereaved Chinese people, their everyday life before loss was largely shaped by an intimate and interdependent relationship with the deceased. When facing the experiences of losing a loved one, for the bereaved person, there were often challenges to his or her interdependent ties with the deceased and the harmony and solidarity within the family due to the distressing nature of dying and death. Furthermore, these accounts have also illustrated that the loss, which questioned the sense of mutual support and responsibility shared within the family, could profoundly challenge the bereaved person's ongoing life from different aspects. In order to continue their ongoing life, many reported how they took various actions so as to redefine relationships with the deceased and other family members. Moreover, by drawing on the predominant family values as well as a range of alternative scripts, these bereaved people conveyed how they were motivated to recover the sense of being part of family as the primary meaning. In so doing, they could live as an interdependent being in their ongoing lives by exchanging care and support, as well as, sharing responsibility not just with the deceased, but also other family members.

Chapter 7

Shidu parents' motivation in China

Introduction

As introduced in Chapter 2 (literature review), there is a special group of bereaved parents in mainland China, known as Shidu parents, that is, parents who have experienced the death of an only child as a result of the One Child policy. As a marginalised group, their bereavement is profoundly shaped by their marginal status, facing them with various challenges affecting their day-to-day lives. Based on interview accounts from 15 Shidu parents (four out of 15 were interviewed as a group), this chapter focuses on these parents' experiences to capture their experiences and motivation in the process of adjusting to the loss of their child. This will be illustrated by considering: 1) how these Shidu parents' everyday lives with their only child were constructed before death; 2) how the child's loss challenged the lives that these parents have taken for granted; and 3) how they were motivated to make sense of and deal with their loss as well as its secondary effects on their ongoing lives (Attig, 2011; Giddens, 1984; Neimeyer (Ed.), 2001; Neimeyer, Klass et al., 2014; Parkes, 1988).

These Shidu parents' everyday lives and the sense of themselves, as strongly conveyed in the interviews, were closely built with their relationship with their only child and expectations for this to be ongoing. Having only one child in the family, meant the parents had greatly devoted themselves to developing an exclusive and intimate relationship with their child, which provided a strong sense of their parenthood. Moreover, the parents placed high expectation on the continuity and further development of the relationship with their only child as a primary (often only) source of exchanging multiple-aspect support in their ongoing lives, especially with regards to their elderly lives. Hence, a strong sense of being interdependent parents had been firmly constructed in many respects of these Shidu parents' daily lives.

As documented in the Shidu parents' accounts, the death of their only child inevitably challenged their taken-for-granted lives as such interdependent parents. The child's death was overwhelmingly considered a "bad" one, which disrupted not only their routinised lives closely built around their only child, but also often left them socio-culturally, economically and practically insecure. Resonating with many other bereavement studies (Bowlby, 1969; Marris, 1974; Neimeyer, Klass et al., 2014; Parkes, 2010, 1986; Rando, 1986; Riches and Dawson, 2000; Stroebe, 1987; Valentine, 2008; Walter, 1999), the interview narratives in this study also illustrate how losing an only child challenged not only includes emotional, mental and physical circumstances, but also their economic, practical and social ones. Furthermore, an unsecured future for elderly care was raised as a main concern by the majority of the parents from the interviews, as children are considered as being primary caregivers for parents in China. As such, the challenges for current lives and uncertainties for the future can profoundly challenge these Shidu parents' sense of meaning and identity in their ongoing lives.

Whilst the struggles and vulnerabilities were profoundly addressed by the Shidu parents during the interviews, motivation to seek meaning was also raised as a significant theme when explaining their bereavement. By accounting for how they felt, what they did, and why they did so in the context of their everyday lives, these Shidu parents' narratives presented a vivid picture of their bereavement experiences and how these were shaped by the sense of their interdependent parenthood. In response to the loss of meaning as well as the practical challenges in their daily lives, as expressed in the narratives, the parents showed determination to recover meaning for their lives through various interactions with individuals, society as well as the government.

In the following, I shed light on the Shidu parents' bereavement experiences through their language in relation to how their interdependent parenthood shaped and was shaped by experiences in their ongoing lives. Moreover, I also concern how these parents were motivated to survive from being childless in various aspects of their lives. The analysis is provided in three parts: 'relationships with the deceased child before death', their 'child's death' and their 'survival after the child's death'. This is followed by a discussion on these Shidu parents' motivation. These broad themes reflect the construction and reconstruction of these parents' motivation in relation

to their bereavement as an ongoing process of redefining their sense of meaning by integrating the past relationships with the deceased into their ongoing lives.

1. Relationships with the deceased child before death

As revealed in the narratives, prior to the child's death, the Shidu parents' ongoing lives were largely constructed through an interdependent relationship with their child, which often led to hopes and expectations on their future lives in close relation to their child. Hence, in responding to their child's loss, the parents from the interviews, like other bereaved people, had relearn their life world and recover meaning for their ongoing lives by integrating their pre-death relationships with their deceased child into their post-mortem lives (Attig, 2011; Walter, 1996). This section analyses these Shidu parents' interpretation of their lives to present how their child death challenged their sense of being interdependent parents, which was predominantly defined by lived experiences with their child. Accordingly, it leads to a discussion about how their ongoing relationships with their deceased child motivated these parents to maintain or recover their sense of being an interdependent parent following their bereavement.

1.1 Developing an exclusive parent-child relationship

Under the One Child Policy, many parents in China, especially in urban areas, were only allowed to have one child. Therefore, these parented to develop an exclusive parenthood with their only child by seeing the child as an extremely important source of engagement in various dimensions of the parties' everyday lives (Wei, 2013). For the parents with an only child, a strong sense of intimacy and interdependence developed from daily interactions has a significant impact on these parents' ongoing lives. Conversely, losing an only child is shocking and challenging for parents in terms of not only their emotional, mental and physical stability, but also their social, economic and practical security. As illustrated in the interviews with the Shidu parents, the fact of child loss had a severe and direct impact on their post-mortem experiences. However, they

were also concerned about the relationship with their child before death and how the changing relationships with their child could challenge their ongoing lives.

Since there was only one child in the family, the Shidu parents primarily devote time and effort to developing an intimate relationship with the child, which exclusively contributed to a strong sense of parenthood:

> *The relationship between my daughter and me was very special, because of her father. Her father was serving the army when she was little, so she had never left me for long. (Hao)*

However, the parenthood was not only developed from commitments made by the parents to their child, for it was also affirmed and enhanced by contributions from him:

> *He also cared about us. For example, when the winter was approaching, he bought coats for us. (Lü)*

By highlighting the reciprocal commitments to the relationships, the Shidu parents were reporting interdependency in relation to their deceased child. This was embodied not only in emotional and mental aspects of the parents' lives, as mentioned above, but also in other ways, such as practically:

> *My son used to hold my hand when we were crossing the road. (Yuan)*

These extracts show that the lives of these Shidu parents prior to their child's death were largely shaped by the interdependency with their child. More importantly, as the only source of being able to develop an interdependent parent-child relationship, these parents had devoted considerable time to their child, placing high hopes and expectations on their child in relation to their own future.

1.2 High expectations for an only child

As conveyed in the interviews, these Shidu parents had high expectations for their only child, considering him or her as, if not the only, but an ideal source for maintaining their ongoing lives

in an interdependent way. Following the relationships developed with their child, the Shidu parents often place high expectations to their child in relation to maintaining and developing the sense of interdependence in their ongoing lives. That is to say, the expectations for their only child had been constructed through the specific parent-child relationship, which was profoundly shaped by a strong emphasis on family values and the sense of reciprocity.

First, children in modern societies are often referred to potentials for future (Riches, 2000; Walter, 1999). Accordingly, the Shidu parents expected their child to live in an interdependent life with them for the long term in their ongoing lives:

> *Although it was already difficult for us to carry on our daily life, we still tried our best to support him to finish the university course. Finally, he graduated ... (Zhang)*

Second, the Shidu parents' expectations on the inter-generational relationship were extremely high, as their only child was often their primary source for access to various support for securing the overall quality of their future, in particular, during their elderly lives. As mentioned above, emotional attachment between parents and their child could provide substantial emotional and mental stability to the former. Thus, a strong tie with their only child was also deeply implanted in Shidu parents' projection of their future lives:

> *In the future, we just want someone (my child) to stay with us during holidays. (Jishui)*

In addition, parental expectations were often placed in intense practical support from their child. Due to there being an undeveloped social welfare system in China, the only child and his or her core family had been considered by the Shidu parents as being the primary caregivers during their elderly lives. They had anticipated that they would not only get emotional support, but also social, economic and practical forms. Whilst a few affluent Shidu parents planned to use high-cost private elderly care services, most would have had to rely largely on their only child and his or her own family for their security in old age:

My leg was hurt by a car recently. When my son was still alive, I am sure he would have taken over all housework and would never have let me walk out of the flat. I would have been lying at home every day. He would have also asked my daughter in law to prepare meals for me. (Guoping)

Third, the patrilineal emphasis in China on the role of male offspring' in continuing the ancestral line had also greatly contributed to some Shidu parents' expectations for their only child. As part of the patrilineal system, some parents expected their child to have a family of their own:

… the couple (my son and his wife) was supposed to have a kid, so that I can look after it. (Guoping)

The expectation for continuity of the family line could be further developed to prospects for their grandchild, if there were any:

My granddaughter is the only offspring of the family… (Lü)

As has been discussed in this section, these Shidu parents' lives, prior to the death of their only child, were largely built on interdependent relationships with and high expectations for their only children. Their day-to-day lives, therefore, involved considerable commitment to maintaining such relationships and thereby, fulfilling those expectations. However, the death of their only child would inevitably challenge the interdependency and fundamentally overturn the taken-for-granted expectations that they had placed on their child.

2. Child death

Child death in modern society tends to be seen as an untimely and unnatural and therefore, a bad one (Riches and Dawson, 2000; Walter, 1999; 2008). From the perspective of broader society, child death is untimely as it is often seen as a failure of medical care and modern technologies due to medicalisation in society (Howarth, 2007). As an unnatural death, child death is often reported to involve suffering and sometimes violence, such as terminal illness or accidents. Their child's death brought considerable emotional and mental turmoil to the Shidu parents. In

particular, as mentioned in the previous section, the 'badness' of losing an only child in China not only seriously threatens parents' ongoing relationship with their deceased child, but is also associated with violating cultural expectations of "good" parenthood, including continuity of the ancestral line and child-centred elderly care. Hence, becoming childless was very likely to place these Shidu parents at a disadvantage in various scenarios (as explained in the following section), which are attributed to the "bad" death of their only child.

2.1 Defining a difficult dying

Child death is not a separate life event, but a turning point connected to the Shidu parents' past and ongoing lives. Hence, the dying process before actual death may have had a strong impact on these parents' perceptions of the death and their continuing lives. Whether a prolonged or sudden dying, bereaved parents are often left with the "non-sense" of the death, which fundamentally challenges their ongoing relationship with the deceased child as well as the sense of themselves.

In modern societies, dying has been overwhelmingly attached with "aging" and "being old" (Finch and Wallis, 1993) and thus, the dying process of a child (no matter whether mature or pre-mature) is almost always considered as being an untimely event involving "unnatural" characteristics. In the interview narratives, many child deaths were described as sudden, leaving the Shidu parents little time to prepare and understand what had happened. By being suddenly confronted with the death of their only child, they understandably felt shocked, numb and shattered:

> *It was so sudden. They drove us to the crematorium. When I saw my son's body, I passed out for a while. (Wang)*

If the death involved violence, it could even escalate the 'difficulty' of the death:

> *He was punched by a drunk guy in his belly, then the outbreak caused his death… Because the blood was acuminated inside. My son's body was black and blue all over. (Guoping)*

Whilst a gradual dying process might give the parents more time to adapt to losing an only child, this would also be hard for the parents, for it could have involved suffering related to terminal illness:

> *He was hospitalised again since he became worse after the two months... He got hydrocephalus, so doctors had to use a pipe to connect his brain to his belly. (Zhang)*

Apart from the hard nature of dying, dying gradually through long-term illness could also undermine parents' economic circumstances. In China, public funded health insurance was limited to civil servants and national employees until a nationwide medical care system was introduced in the late 2000s. As a result, many Shidu parents had to cover the cost of their child's treatment all by themselves. Hence, some of them were faced with economic difficulties, such as insufficient funds to support the treatments and consequent huge debts:

> *The treatments (throughout the 2 years) in all cost about 300,000 - 400,000 CNY (£30,000 - £40,000)… I had to borrow hundreds of thousands CNY… At the end, it was a double loss to me, I lost both my son and my savings. (Zhang)*

2.2 Perceiving Shidu as a bad death

For these Shidu parents, a difficult dying might evoke a strong sense of "bad death", which was likely to have further impact on their ongoing lives. As the interviews show, apart from a difficult dying, the sense of bad death of the only child could also be defined in many other ways, as explained below.

Frist, the child death challenged parents' overall lives, regarding which, high expectations of continuing interdependence had been firmly established. The Shidu parents' accounts indicate that the death was seen as an immediate and unexpected shutdown of the futures of both the deceased child as well as the parents. As shown from the narratives, a bad death was often strongly associated with unexpectedness, which violated a general sense of having a future for both parties:

She was studying in medical school to become a doctor in the future. Our family was heading in a good direction. However, it all disappeared. (Mai)

Second, being different from other bereaved parents, the Shidu parents inevitably face childlessness, which is culturally and practically defined as bad. Due to thousands of years of Confucian emphasis on the continuity of the ancestral line, becoming childless was likely to threaten the entire family as a disgraceful death. Moreover, the Shidu fathers were more likely to consider this status as bad in the sense of not being able to carry on the family line:

I was concerned that some people may stigmatise me by saying I cut off my family line. (Xu)

Third, due to the longstanding social values of filial piety and the undeveloped social welfare system in mainland China, parent-child relationships have been profoundly constructed on the basis of intergenerational care exchange. Hence, loss of the only child was very likely to pose a profound threat to the Shidu parents' old age security. As reported by many, the death of their only child overturned expectations for their ongoing, especially, elderly lives, which were expected to be primarily supported by their child. As a result, losing an only child might be experienced as a bad death for Shidu parents in a practical sense:

Now is the time we need his care and support, but he is gone forever. There is no hope for us in the future. (Yuan)

An unsupportive welfare system could add further negativities to "Shidu" in terms of these parents' elderly lives:

The society is still undeveloped in terms of welfare… What can we do if we get ill? It is a very practical issue that we must face. (Hao)

Fourth, the badness of being Shidu was not just restricted to parents themselves, for it could also apply to other family members:

She just got married for 9 months. It was also a huge shock to the life of my son-in-law. (Shang)

Sometimes, the fact of being Shidu parents was considered harmful and dangerous to vulnerable family members:

> *We concealed my son's death to both my own and my husband's parents. My mother suffers from cerebral infarction. It is already quite severe, I don't want to make it worse. (Lü)*

The process of dying and the consequence of death, as shown in the above accounts, were often seen as negative, as they challenged or even overturned Shidu parents' expectations for their ongoing lives, which were largely shaped by the sense of interdependence between themselves and their only child. With regards to their ongoing lives, the death was not only likely to shatter the parents' world once taken for grant, but could also have impact on their everyday lives after their child loss in relation to being motivated to deal with their bereavement.

3. Survival after child death

Shidu could be strongly associated with loss of the sense of being an interdependent parent to the only child, which had provided significant meaning to various aspects of their everyday lives before the death. In a strongly relational society, like China, the Shidu parents' sense of themselves has been closely constructed and constantly shaped by interdependency with others, among whom their deceased child plays a primary role. In responding to losing the primary source for being an interdependent parent, the Shidu parents from the interviews were motivated to recover their interdependence from different sources. This section is dedicated to showing how the sense of interdependent parenthood were shattered by becoming Shidu. In addition, how that parenthood shaped and was shaped by Shidu parents' bereavement experiences in motivating them to negotiate with different parties and resources in a fast-changing Chinese society, is also probed.

3.1 Impacts of becoming childless

Child death can bring a range of impacts across parents' everyday lives, including emotional, physical, economic, practical and social aspects (Davies, 2004; Rando, 1986; Riches and Dawson, 2000; Rosenblatt, 2000; Talbot, 2002). For Shidu parents, these impacts can be further intensified by their childless status and the wider socio-cultural environment. This situation reflects that the loss of an only child in China represents not only the loss of a beloved son or daughter, but also of a potential primary caregiver and a descendant for the family. In the following, the Shidu parents' accounts are analysed to show how becoming childless challenges various dimensions of their lives, as well as how these challenges could further challenge the fundamental sense of interdependence and parenthood.

Emotional impact

Losing someone close in life inevitably challenges bereaved people's emotional stability, which has been largely secured by an ongoing relationship with the deceased before death (Holst-Warhaft, 2000; Parkes, 2010, 1986; Riches and Dawson, 2000; Valentine, 2009b; 2013; 2017). For these Shidu parents, the emotional shock and disruption could be further escalated as the loss challenged and even overturned their exclusive parenthood with their only child.

Due to the sharp contrast between their relationship with and expectations of their child before and after death, the Shidu parents would experience various emotional reactions, such as, sadness, loneliness, guilty and regret, depending on their personal life experiences. However, as the narratives show, the most common reactions were sadness and loneliness, which were often aggravated by the fact of childlessness:

> *I am afraid of holidays and the new year. I feel sadder and lonelier as no one comes to visit us. (Mai)*

Moreover, the feeling of loneliness could be intensified along with aging, especially after retirement, in that leaving the work place could significantly reduce their interactions with others:

> *I have been working in a college for 15 years since I retired as I didn't want to suffer from loneliness by staying at home. (Jianyi)*

Physical impact

Emotional impacts tended to be intense and prolonged in the Shidu parents' ongoing lives and were often accompanied with health impacts. As suggested by other studies (Parkes, 2010, 1986; Stroebe, 1987), loss is likely to place bereaved people at high risk of health issues. Accordingly, many Shidu parents reported their suffering from different health issues in their ongoing lives. In addition, health conditions, especially the increasing health problems that tend to accompany aging, might also shape other aspects of the Shidu parents' lives.

First, as an untimely, particularly a sudden or violent death, the shocking nature could physically knock parents down:

> *Several days later, I fell ill. I rested at home for one month before returning to my work. (Guoping)*

In their ongoing lives, negative emotions were also likely to worsen these Shidu parents' physical health:

> *I know a Shidu mother who was diagnosed with cancer last year and passed away soon. She'd been heart-broken by her loss for a long time. (Nie)*

Second, the aging process could increasingly challenge the physical capability of these parents, especially through health issues:

> *I can't promise I will stay healthy forever. Along with getting old, I feel more and more hard to keep myself healthy. A cold, diarrhea or flu can simply knock me down now. (Zhang)*

Apart from the increasing health risks, the current medical system was also reported to threaten Shidu parents' access to certain types of medical care. According to the regulations in many hospitals in China, elderly patients are often required a signature from a close family member and preferably their child(ren) to access some treatments, such as hospitalisation and operations,

since children are considered as the primary caregiver to take the responsibility for their parents. As such, some parents expressed their concern with their medical care in their old age:

> *In the following year, I was diagnosed with a deadly disease. When I was trying to get the admission to the hospital for further treatments, the hospital required a signature from a family member. However, I didn't have any family members with me at the time… Although my student who was with me in the hospital had given all of the information to the hospital, the hospital still rejected him. At the end, my wife who lived in another city had to come to sign it by travelling for a long distance… Sometimes, I am thinking what I gonna do when I am getting really old, especially if my wife died before me. (Xu)*

Third, due to limited social and medical welfare in China, health issues could also lead to financial difficulties, with consequences for their daily living:

> *I suffer from an incurable skin disease and my husband has been diagnosed with over 10 different conditions. We have spent a lot of money on medical care, which can't be covered by our pension. (Mai)*

As a result, these practical difficulties could exacerbate these Shidu parents' sense of insecurity regarding their future lives to the extent of evoking suicidal thoughts, reflecting their isolation and marginalisation from the society (Durkheim, 1897/2005):

> *No one could take care of me in the hospital as my sisters were too busy. I was really thinking about jumping out of the window… (Hou)*

Economic impact

Due to limited public medical support in China, health issues were also likely to challenge the economic capabilities of the majority of these Shidu parents, except those who are affluent.

However, these Shidu parents' financial difficulties could also be caused by other matters, including costs related to their child's dying as well as their needs for everyday living.

A prolonged dying might incur ongoing costs for the Shidu parents, particularly if their child had a terminal illness, which needed expensive treatment. As mentioned above, a nationwide medical security system was only slowly introduced in China in the late 2000s. Hence, many Shidu parents, especially those who lost their child before the changes, were forced to draw on their savings and even run into debt for their child's treatment. As a result, many of the parents from the interviews had to carry on their lives with heavy debts, which could threaten their long-term financial security. As conveyed by a father who borrow 2 million yuan (over £200,000) for his son's treatments:

> *I have been using the pension to maintain my everyday life and pay the rent. I still need to think about saving some money for my elderly care, but the pension is low… Although I have been saving everyday penny I can for repaying the debts, I am still afraid that I can't repay all of them back before I die. (Zhang)*

In addition to the costs of their dying child's treatment, Shidu parents' ongoing lives, especially, their aging could also be costly. Thus, they might face economic challenges related to sustaining the quality of their lives as they age. Since the One Child Policy was first implemented in the late 1970s, the first generation of these parents have now reached an age requiring continual care from others. Many of these elderly parents, not only those in debt but also working or middle-class parents, expressed their worries about their economic ability to access external services:

> *My pension is only about 2000 CNY a month, which is not even enough for the rent in a private retirement home… I really have no clue about my future, I am afraid thinking of it. (Mai)*

Practical impact

As introduced earlier in this section, aging parents in China tend to rely on their adult children as caregivers, who provide continual care to their parents on a daily basis. Whilst a good financial situation might to some extent provide a substitute for their child's role in their practical care, as the interview extracts above have shown, the majority of the Shidu parents were not able to access external care sources for financial reasons. For many Shidu parents, the concerns with practical support related mainly to their present and future lives. In the present, many Shidu parents were still able to take care of themselves in their daily lives and to take mutual responsibility with their partner for practical support. However, their sense of marital security could be threatened by health conditions:

> *Now I have to take 100% responsibility for looking after my wife. But how can I, if I get sick as well? (Zhang)*

Furthermore, along with aging, these Shidu parents tended to face extra challenges in their practical lives due to the declining physical abilities of both themselves and their partner. As a result, many of those from the interviews conveyed their worries and fears related to the uncertainties surrounding their practical support in old age:

> *He (husband) has severe heart disease, so he may pass away anytime in the future … I am in my 60s now, what will happen when I am in my 70s or when I can't move anymore and am stuck in bed? … When that day comes, I will have to die at home. (Mai)*

Family and Social impact

Losing an only child could not only challenge the Shidu parents' individual lives, for it could also threaten their social lives. As social beings, their status was largely defined by their parenthood before their child died and hence, the consequence of becoming childless could profoundly challenge their social relationships. First, as mentioned above, traditional beliefs in the ancestral line often prescribe roles to parents, especially to the fathers in continuing the family line. However, as a result of becoming childless, some Shidu parents from the interviews tended to

feel guilty and therefore to exclude themselves from the family due to failing to fulfil the obligation of continuing the family line:

> *Being childless is one of the three biggest sins for the family and ancestors. Now I have lost my only son, I really can't go to face my parents. (Jishui)*

Sometimes, these Shidu parents might also be excluded by others due to violating the cultural emphasis on the ancestral line:

> *Sometimes neighbours just gossiped that I have cut off my ancestral line, because I have been an evil person. (Xu)*

Second, death itself and anyone who has experienced death are often seen as taboo in Chinese culture. Hence, the Shidu parents could have to face exclusion and stigma from others due to the death of their child:

> *Some people didn't invite me to their wedding. They tended to see me as a woman with misfortune as my child and husband both died… Also, some people wouldn't allow me to enter their new home, because they wanted to avoid bad luck. (Yong)*

Third, as relational beings, these parents would often define themselves through relationships with society and others. Consequently, socio-cultural pressures and stigma from others might lead them to self-stigma and to exercise self-isolation:

> *After my son passed away, I moved to a completely new area to avoid people I know… When people ask about my son, I just tell them he's moved abroad. I don't want people know about my son's death.* (Jishui)

The self-isolation and self-stigma could have ongoing impacts on some Shidu parents' later lives. That is to say, being childless could challenge their expectations for being 'good' (grand)parents and having 'good' elderly lives, especially, in comparison with other 'normal' parents:

> *Just imagine if we were staying in a retirement home with normal elderly parents. They might get their child and grandchild come to visit for their*

birthdays or for the new year, so that they could enjoy time with the family. Then, how would we feel? (Zhang)

Impact of being Shidu: challenges to an interdependent life

To sum up, being Shidu was likely to challenge the Shidu parents' interdependent parenthood in different aspects of their everyday lives. By losing an only child, a potential caregiver and a family descendant, they had to face the loss of their primary source of interdependence in both their individual and social lives. That, these parents would lose the opportunity for reciprocity in terms of care and support with their child. This would mean having to face various emotional, physical, economic, practical and social challenges alone. Furthermore, these challenges shown above were often interconnected, thus, bringing enormous instability and insecurity to the Shidu parents' ongoing lives. With their present suffering and future uncertainty, the majority of the Shidu parents from the interviews found difficult or even impossible to securitise a good life for their old age. Due to the considerable gap between their needs for their elderly lives and their limited resources, most Shidu interviewees were left feeling desperate and hopeless about their future:

If someone asks me about our elderly care plan, I always feel desperate. I really have no idea about what we should do. (Lü)

In extreme cases, some parents expressed feeling suicidal when it came to their future lives:

I am planning to die at 70 years old. I am 60 years old this year, so I will have to think about how to kill myself in 10 years… I prefer death to suffering in my old age. (Yuan)

3.2 Finding Support

Given these Shidu parents had to face various challenges for their ongoing lives, they might also seek support for these from different sources. As illustrated above, their lives before their child's

death were largely shaped by the sense of interdependent parenthood, a perspective deeply embedded in their perceptions of their past, present and future lives. When facing the loss of their only child, the Shidu parents were confronted with issues of how to adapt their perception of parenthood to the reality of being childless and how to recover interdependency in their continuing lives. In order to address this, in addition to self-support, some negotiated support from various potential sources, including family, wider society and the government. Drawing on their accounts, this section aims to demonstrate how the Shidu parents from the interviews were motivated to deal with their child loss and the effects of being childless, as well as, how they were motivated to recover the fundamental meaning of being an interdependent parent by interacting with Chinese society via self-support, family support, support from wider society and from the government.

Self-support

As conveyed in the interviews, the Shidu parents were likely to rely on their own resources as far as possible in making sense of their loss and dealing with the various challenges in their lives. This approach reflects how one-child families in urban areas[10] tend to rely on this core family unit, on the exchange of care and support between the parents and the only child. Moreover, as will be explained later, family, social and governmental support could only provide limited resources for Shidu parents' lives for a range of reasons. As a result, having lost their only child, they usually had to rely on their own resources with limited external support to adjust to their bereavement in three different dimensions of their lives.

First, in their emotional lives, some of the Shidu parents from the interviews succeeded in recovering and maintaining interdependence, although they achieved this in many different ways. As many studies have suggested, bereaved parents may maintain their parental roles through

[10] The interviews used in this chapter were based in urban areas, which are different from rural areas in several ways in terms of their family affairs. First, the One Child Policy was strictly implemented in urban areas, whereas in rural areas this was less so. Second, being shaped by growing urbanisation and individualism, urban residents are more likely to live in a core family apart from their broader family, which is not nearly so common in rural areas.

continuing bonds with their deceased child that may be experienced as mutual and thus interdependent (Klass, 1997; 1999; Klass, Silverman et al., 1996; Rando, 1986; Riches and Dawson, 2000). For the Shidu parents in the interviews too, the sense of parenthood was predominantly reported to have an ongoing impact on their emotional lives in relation to sensing the support offered to and received from their deceased child. As shown in the account below, the parent tried to provide continuous emotional support to their deceased son, thus reflecting their unshakeable bonds:

> *He was resting there (a cemetery) by him alone, that's why we bought the grave next to other deceased one-childs (who were born under the One-Child Policy), hoping he could make some friends there. We also insist on visiting him at least once a month, so that he won't feel lonely and abandoned. (Yuan)*

Meanwhile, in identifying themselves as receivers of emotional support from their child, some parents sought to preserve their deceased child's agency in their ongoing lives, so that they could feel more supported:

> *The recovery was a miracle, which I think was blessed by my son. There was a huge infarction in the main brain stem; incredibly, I recovered without any sequelae. (Xu)*

On the other hand, the physical absence of their deceased child could challenge the continuing bonds, causing emotional distress. Hence, some parents reported their attempts to remove the influence of their deceased child from their lives, but the strongly remaining sense of parenthood did not allow them to abandon the emotional ties:

> *I hide my daughter's photos, to avoid sadness… How can I not miss her? I miss her every day and dream about her very often. (Mai)*

Whilst they might be unable to achieve emotional strength through weakening ties with their deceased child, many Shidu parents managed to stabilise their emotional status in their own ways by recovering and developing the interdependence and reciprocity through their own resources

(Godelier, 1999; Mauss, 2000). For example, some of those tried to consider a pet as an alternative source for reciprocity of emotional support by substituting it for their deceased child:

> *I thought my son's Chinese zodiac is a dog and it looked very cute, so I decided to keep a dog at home as my "grandson" … Unexpectedly, he got very attached to me… Why I want to get a driving license is because of this dog… my dog helped me a lot… Now this dog is my biggest meaning in life. (Xu)*

Second, in contrast to recovering interdependence in the emotional aspects, many Shidu parents had to develop a sense of independence in their practical lives in order to survive various kinds of impact from losing the primary caregiver. As emphasised above, children are expected to take a primary role in supporting their aging parents due to the cultural emphasis on filial piety and the undeveloped social welfare systems. As a result, most Shidu parents raised the lack of support for their everyday lives, especially for their aging lives, as a key concern in their ongoing lives. For many of those from the interviews, developing a sense of independence was important for their day-to-day practical lives. For example, when a father was talking about his elderly care, he said:

> *What about if I didn't have a son?... Then I would have to rely on myself anyway, if I were childless. (Guoping)*

Some Shidu parents, particularly middle-class ones with economic security for their daily lives, still conveyed how they could barely afford external care services and thus, would need to try to manage their finances to secure a 'good' aging:

> *… now we just need to think about ourselves, such as, buy some insurance for ourselves. By doing this, to be honest, I hope we could have a relatively better future. (Lü)*

Whilst these Shidu parents attempted to recover independence in their practical lives, they often had to seek support from others due to their limited resources and expectations of a 'good' parenthood. Hence, achieving independence could be compromised by seeking practical support in their lives from others:

I am trying to do everything by myself, but there are things that are really beyond my ability. For example, as an old single woman, I have to ask neighbors or relatives to come to repair pipes and changing light bolts for me. (Hao)

Third, due to the irreplaceable sense of parenthood and the physical absence of their deceased child, some Shidu parents were intending to give birth to another child in order to regain the sense of interdependence for their overall lives. However, their accounts show that having another child was very challenging for them in many respects, especially following the loss of their fertility. As the interviews showed, the high costs of having a test-tube baby and the practicalities of raising the child could place parents in a difficult situation:

I borrowed over 1 million CNY (around £120, 000) to try for the test-tube baby… I did worry about the child's health condition and our ability to take care of him/her, because we (my wife and I) are both quite old now. (Qi)

Regardless of these challenges, some Shidu parents still tried their best to bear another child. In so doing, these parents appeared to see the new-born child as an alternative source for the exchange of support in the physical, emotional and social aspects of their lives, by recovering their interdependent parenthood.

We wanted to have another child to be a comfort to us… He (the new-born) child could be with us instead of my deceased son. Also, having another son enabled me to face my parents (in terms of the responsibility of carrying on the family line). (Jishui)

Looking back at this section, the various forms of these Shidu parents' self-support would appear to have been shaped by the motivation to recover the sense of interdependent parenthood. When losing their only child, they would exploit their own resources to recover reciprocal support and care in different dimensions of their lives, either through ongoing bonds with their deceased child or new relationships with other supplementary sources, such as a pet. However, due to the limits of their self-resources and the nature as their relational beings, self-support alone was

unlikely to completely fulfil the Shidu parents' motivation to recover interdependent parenthood. Instead, they also tended to seek external sources of support.

Family support

In China, the family has been long considered the primary institution for providing care and support for its members (Sheng and Settles, 2006). Accordingly, the Shidu parents in the interviews also sought support for their ongoing lives from other family members. Along with the socio-demographic changes, especially the implementation of the One Child Policy, the family structure of many Chinese families has changed dramatically from a broader family of multiple generations to the immediate family unit of parents and an only child (Williiams and Calnan, 1996). As a result, the sense of family for these Shidu parents was more dependent on their core family rather than the broader one. That is, these parents were more likely to seek support from their core family, even though members from the broader family might also be able to provide support for them. In the context of the changing family structure of the Shidu parents, this section looks at support from family members, including 'partner', 'relatives', their 'deceased child's partner' and their 'grandchild', if any.

Partner

After losing an only child in the core family, the partner was often the only remaining source of care and support for these Shidu parents. Many of them from the interviews strongly conveyed how a close and supportive marital relationship was helping them in their everyday lives. Following the shock of their child's death and its impact on their daily lives and future plans, the mutual-reliance between partners could reduce Shidu parents' sense of insecurity and help with practical difficulties. As the interviews showed, having a supportive partner could provide mutual reassurance to them, including comfort in their grief:

I just realise I am lucky compared to people who lost both their child and husband. At least, I still have my husband with me… When my husband feels emotional, I am always there to comfort him. (Lü)

As such, a positive and mutually supportive relationship with the partner could contribute to recovering emotional strength:

I think I and my husband really love and support each other very much… My husband's love and support help my fight the depression. (Shang)

In addition to emotional support, many Shidu parents also relied on their partner as a source of practical support and care exchange in their daily lives:

Our bodies are aging now, so we (my wife and I) have to take our responsibilities to help each other in our daily lives. (Xu)

As shown above, the marital support could improve the Shidu parents' everyday lives in different ways. However, the loss of the only child could fundamentally challenge and overturn these Shidu parents' family structure, resulting in losing the partner as a significant support source:

Many people have divorced since their loss, because they tend to blame each other. (Shang)

Marital ties could be challenged through divorce and even overturned through the death of their partner, following the death of the only child. However, some divorced and widowed Shidu parents managed to rebuild a family from others, primarily, other Shidu parents, to regain what was lost from the marriage as a significant source of care and support:

Some Shidu parents I know remarried other Shidu parents to get some reliance when they get old. There are some chat groups for single Shidu parents who want to rebuild a family. (Nie)

Relatives

Whilst the partner from the core family was the primary source of support for the Shidu parents from the interviews, the support from relatives in the broader family was also important, especially for those who had no partner. By developing and enhancing relationships mainly with their siblings, nephews and nieces, they tended to seek alternative source for support in their everyday lives (Miall, 1986). For example, one divorced mother pointed out the importance of support from relatives:

> *My little sister has accompanied me every year to visit my daughter's grave, so has my sister' child. I didn't feel alone because of their company. If there were no them, especially if there was no my little sister... I have to thank my little sister as she has kept paying the pension insurance for me; otherwise, I couldn't have got my pension from 2007. (Hao)*

However, under the influence of the Chinese emphasis on 'exchange' in family support, the support from broader family was often limited due to the Shidu parents feeling that they had not provided sufficient support to their relatives before their loss. Hence, relatives were more likely to prioritise their own family than that of Shidu parents:

> *I have two brothers and a little sister… We all were busy for taking care of our own families so far, I don't think they really can support me much, rather than their own families. (Guoping)*

Moreover, due to the concern about the exchange-based support, the Shidu interviewees also tended to exclude themselves from receiving support from their relatives:

> *My siblings always invite my husband and me to visit them for the new year; however, they have their own families. As outsiders, we don't want to disturb them. (Mai)*

In addition to relationships with younger relatives in the broader family, the parents of some of the Shidu parents from the interviews were still alive after the child's death. As caregivers themselves, these Shidu parents often felt a responsibility for supporting their own parents in their aging lives. As mentioned previously, child death is always shocking and often very

threatening to more vulnerable family members, such as the elderly. Hence, some Shidu parents chose to conceal the death of their child to their elderly parents and instead, practiced their own filial piety by supporting them:

> *We are trying to conceal the truth even now by saying that my son is working abroad. My mum has serious heart disease, so I want to protect her from the shocks and give her a good elderly life. (Lü)*

Deceased child's partner

If their deceased child was married before his or her death, his or her partner could also be a potential source of family support, but the situation varied depending on relationships between the Shidu parents and that person. A negative relationship with their child's partner, as the interviews show, was unlikely to contribute to fulfilling their need of the sense of interdependency:

> *My daughter in law is awful… She contacts me only whenever she needs me… In fact, we are older than her parents, but she tends to think we are younger and we need to contribute more to the child. She never cares about us. (Lü)*

On the other hand, a positive relationship with their deceased child's partner could profoundly enhance the Shidu parents' emotional well-being through mutual support:

> *My son-in-law is a great comfort to my life... Of course, it is because we have been supporting each other for a long time. (Shang)*

However, support from their child's partner was more likely to be restricted to emotional support. That is, many Shidu parents hesitated to receive practical support as they were not able to "exchange" it with their son/daughter in law:

> *My daughter in law also said, 'Dad, even if I get married, I will take you with me'. I am really glad that she thinks so, but she is not my biological child after all and I haven't devoted much to her so far. (Guoping)*

Grandchild

If the deceased child had a child of their own, the grandchild could be a significant source of the interdependent family support, by which some Shidu parents from the interviews could build intimate and reciprocal relationships with their grandchild as a means of carrying on the sense of parenthood. As the interviews show, wanting to provide support to their grandchild could strongly shape these Shidu parents' motivation in their bereavement. By taking responsibility for their deceased child as well as their grandchild, they could become more resilient to various challenges in their ongoing lives:

> *I won't be knocked down as I have my granddaughter to look after. I have the responsibility to raise her up as her mum's family is not able to do so. (Wang)*

Through offering support, these Shidu parents were also likely to benefit from the emotional comfort deriving from interactions developed with their grandchild. Furthermore, the interdependent relationship could play a primary role in supporting these parents' emotionality:

> *My granddaughter is very caring to me as I am to her… She always says that she is not my granddaughter, but the youngest daughter … she is the biggest comfort in my life now. (Wang)*

Furthermore, by developing an intimate and interdependent relationship with their grandchild, these Shidu parents tended to carry on their responsibilities for their deceased child. One grandmother experienced more emotional disruption rather than comfort in daily interactions with her granddaughter. Yet, she still insisted on meeting her responsibility for supporting her granddaughter as a means of continuing her parental role:

> *My granddaughter told me she would only miss me when she needs me to buy things for her. Honestly, I felt very heartbroken. But the only reason why I take care of her is exactly because I am doing this for my son. (Lü)*

To summarise from the above accounts, there were various potential sources for interdependent support for Shidu parents in different dimensions of their lives, depending on their pre-existing

family structures. Although relatives, their deceased child's partner and/or their grandchild might be able to reduce some of the burdens in the Shidu parents' practical lives and bring emotional comfort, the mutual marital source tended to provide the strongest security for exchange of frequent and essential care as well as support. However, having no partner could lead Shidu parents to lose the primary support from the core family, where is the source for interdependent care and support. As a result, many parents expressed their fear of becoming spouseless in relation to it leading them into a more vulnerable and desperate position in their lives:

> *If one member of a couple dies first, that person will be lucky as he/she would suffer less. (Yuan)*

Furthermore, as indicated, 'family' was the primary institution providing essential meaning to various aspects of people's everyday lives. Accordingly, recovering that sense of being in a family could help to reshape the everyday lives of these Shidu parents, whose family structure had been dramatically changed. However, some tended to seek a sense of meaning as an interdependent being by turning to external sources from the broader society.

Support from broader society

As evidenced in the interviews, the support for the Shidu parents from the interviews was not limited to each other and their family members, for it could also include the broader society. That is, since their own resources and those of family members were often limited, many would also turn to the broader society to seek support. As a source of various social relationships, society as a whole was likely to offer a range of support from the different social circles of these parents. As mentioned above, all the Shidu parents from the interviews were based in urban areas due to the rigid implementation of the One Child Policy in these areas and also the lack of accessibility to rural Shidu parents. These parents sought and received different kinds of support from various sources, including social groups and other non-family individuals.

For the Shidu parents who I approached, social groups were of two types: their work units and non-profit making organisations, such as, self-help groups and charities. In relation to their work

units, in the more socialist economy of China before its economic reform in the late 20th century, people had a strong sense of belonging, which they devoted themselves to. Thus, even nowadays, some Shidu parents still saw their (former) work units as a potential source of alternative support apart from each other and family. Furthermore, the support from the work unit was often focused on practical aspects. However, it was only likely to provide limited support for the Shidu parents unless they were desperate:

> *A manager and some colleagues from work lived next door. I had to ask them for help for several times when he (my husband) had a sudden heart attack. I had no one that I could rely on. We are from the same work unit, I knew they would help us if we were desperate… Otherwise, they wouldn't… (Mai)*

However, some Shidu parents reported their hesitation in seeking support from their work unit due to their concern with the sense of support exchange and mutual responsibility:

> *However, I won't ask them if not urgently necessary. After all, we are the outsiders for them, they have no obligations of helping us. (Mai)*

Different to the limited practical support from the work unit, support from social organisations tended to be more flexible and multiple-faceted. In urban regions, many social groups have been formed and operated by Shidu parents themselves in order to provide reciprocal support among their members. Called 'Shidu Self-help groups' or 'Shidu associations' by the parents from the interviews, some of these Shidu organisations had become an important source of emotional and practical support as well as the sense of interdependence for many of their members. Normally as self-run organisations, these Shidu groups have played an important role in integrating and support individual Shidu parents. By regularly meeting to discuss their issues and organising social events, many members in these groups have developed not only close relationships with other members but also solid attachment to the groups. As the only officially registered Shidu organisation in China to date, the Huaihua City (Hunan Province) based organisation had become the most important support source for many of its members. Many parents in this organisation showed great appreciation and reliance on it for emotional support:

When we come together, we always feel supported. That brings great comfort… (Jianyi)

In addition to emotional support, many of these Shidu parents also sought practical support to deal with their daily living, which sometimes included financial difficulties:

No one cares about us except the association. The leader, Mrs Nie, often calls me to check everything is okay as I have to take care of my wife in the hospital everyday… They are very helpful, sometimes they come to take care of my wife when I am unavailable. (Zhang)

I told the association when my husband was hospitalised, so they came to visit us and brought CNY 3000 (about £250) to us to help with the hospital cost. (Mai)

The Shidu organisation itself was eligible for receiving governmental of charitable funds. As the head of the group said:

Because of the existence of the association, we can receive funds from the government and other charities, so that we can use them to organise some events for ourselves. (Nie)

It would appear that the organisation as a social institution had more potential for accessing and receiving external funds, rather than individuals. Hence, many Shidu parents would raise their concerns with their old age security through urging more support to this organisation:

Funding from government and donations from entrepreneurs and celebrities could help Shidu organisations build up dedicated care homes for Shidu parents, where we could spend the rest of our lives. (Zhang)

By seeing the organisation as a potential platform securing their elderly lives, many parents planned a future, which was based on multiple support between Shidu parents in externally funded Shidu care homes:

Younger Shidu parents could take care of elderly Shidu parents. Healthy Shidu parents could take care of those who are sick. In so doing, we could support each other and end our lives with each other. (Hao)

These expectations for elderly lives were not just figments of these parents' imagination, but rather, were a potential reality owing to strong bonds that had been developed between members in their daily interactions with each other. Many Shidu parents from the interviews had developed a strong sense of interdependence with other members and their relationships were often defined in terms of a strong sense of family involving the other parents.

It is a big family where we can talk with each other. All of us have our broken individual families, only in this big family, can we really talk to each other about our issues… We are all brothers and sisters, whenever we have troubles and difficulties, we always share them with each other and help each other. (Jianyi)

As shown above, many Shidu parents found that the self-managed organisation could provide a family-like environment for them to seek interdependent support for their ongoing lives. However, due to the lack of such self-help groups in some regions or personal preferences, some Shidu parents turned to other social groups, such as, volunteer groups, for support. Several Shidu mothers mentioned how participating in a volunteer group had shaped their sense of meaning for their lives. As relational beings, these parents, like many other Chinese, had primarily developed their sense of self based on their self-presentation to others and how this was evaluated and regarded by others in certain social interactions (Goffman, 1956). Regarding which, positive feedback from and good relationships with the volunteer groups could contribute to some Shidu parents recovering a sense of 'family' and consequently meaning for their lives:

I participated in a project in 2015 to help students living in poverty. I was matched with a student who lost her parents. It brought some comfort to me as I became very close to her. I try to give care to them from being a "grandmother" and I am her grandmother now… Many volunteers, especially

ones who are similar in age to me, respect me a lot. I always call them brothers or sisters. (Hao)

Sometimes, these social groups could also facilitate the sense of meaning by introducing external support resources to these parents:

The director of the volunteering association introduced me to an MA student in social work... I talked a lot with her as I felt comfortable talking to her. Her classmates even said they would like to come to visit me with her one day. I am really moved by them… I am trying to reintegrate myself into the society, the bigger family. The more I am trying, I believe the more I will meet people who are like my children. I am really glad. (Hao)

However, the meaning was more likely to be temporary, for many Shidu parents did not place expectation for the future of their old age security upon these volunteer groups.

Compared with social groups, non-family members from the broader society were also reported as potential sources from where some Shidu parents could seek support. Interestingly, many of those from the interviews considered talking to me as a means of promoting their issues to the wider public and policy makers. That is, they were aiming to attract more attention and further, to pursue getting a more supportive environment for their ongoing lives:

If you could write a good paper on our Shidu parents, it could improve public awareness and we would receive more sympathy. Then, it will be a great comfort for us. (Mai)

Regarding individuals in their everyday lives, many Shidu parents found emotional comfort from friends and other people, who provided emotional and practical support in their daily lives, though they still tended to maintain the insider-outsider divide due to their strong sense of the need for care and support exchange:

Some of my former students really care about me even now… when I was hospitalised. It was very hot, so my students help me clean my body and wash my feet. I think some of them had never done anything like this to their

own parents, but they did their best to take care of me. I couldn't want to add any more burdens on them. (Xu)

In addition, some parents deliberately sought young adults through the internet and sometimes social events to be their 'nominally adoptive child'. In China, there has been a long tradition for couples to adopt children, especially boys, to carry on family line. In contemporary China, although the adoption is not happening as frequent as in the past, many childless couples, including a number of Shidu parents, are keen to adopt a child to complete/rebuild the traditional parents-child family structure. For example, a father talked about his intention to 'adopt' a son to recover his fatherhood, although the adoption does not restrict to young children but also adult children who can offer them with emotional reassurance:

I can't leave my son behind, so I need someone to replace him, so I always check the Shidu website, if there are any young guys needing help… If my son were alive, he would be in his late 20s now. So young guys can always draw my attention… I don't expect anything from them, but just want to practice my fatherly role. (Xu)

Conversely, other Shidu parents expressed their hesitation in adopting a young child. They had fears of failing to achieve the inter-generational support exchange due to having no biological bonds with the child:

We gave up the idea of adopting a child as a non-biological child might not be able to be close to us and support us when he/she grows up. (Mai)

To summarise, many of the Shidu parents in the interviews sought support from the broader society, which offered a range of collective and individual resources. These people were likely to receive short-term practical support from their work units, whilst they might also be able to benefit from ongoing and comprehensive support provided by self-help organisations. Indeed, these self-help groups could provide significant resources enabling parents to recover their need for interdependency in different aspects of their lives. However, lack of funding restricted the development of these groups, resulting in their provided limited security for Shidu parents' old age. A mother as the head of a Shidu self-help group conveyed her worries about the funding:

Our group is self-funded. As a leader, I'd love to organise some events and provide more comprehensive support to the members, especially those who are of very old age. However, as a non-profit organisation, we have to negotiate with the government and other funding bodies to get funding, but what we can get is far less than what is needed. (Nie)

Meanwhile, some Shidu parents might also receive various support from different individuals according to their personal circumstances, as well as seek support from other young adults as an alternative source of parenthood. Whilst many parents tried to actively seek support from society, as conveyed, they were somewhat isolated by the society (as previously discussed). Therefore, some parents reported that the internet provided a useful means of accessing support from the wider society. As a tool connecting people beyond geographical distance and social background, the internet was used by many Shidu parents to reach other possible support beyond personal and familial resources. For example, one Shidu mother mentioned how her life had been changed since she learned how to use the internet:

A volunteer taught me how to use chat apps during the project and my life was changed since then. I signed up the WeChat and QQ accounts (chat apps), where I joined the volunteer association and some Shidu chat groups… I really feel relieved from participating volunteering and talking to people… I am really enjoying life now; honestly, my health is improving this year. (Hao)

Thus, by engaging with different social circles, the Shidu parents in the interviews primarily would either directly or indirectly recover their sense of family by seeking mutual support and the sense of parenthood through transferring their bonds with their deceased child to someone else.

Government support

Many Shidu parents felt that the government should take on the main responsibility for supporting them and ensuring their old age security. Given the primary role of the government in relation to the introduction and implementation of the One Child (officially, Family-Planning)

Policy, the majority of these parents were of the view that the government should take more action to support their lives and to compensate for their loss. As explained in Chapter 2, there have been ongoing debates on the governmental support for Shidu parents since the turn of the century. Despite the state showing an enhanced focus on supporting these parents, there is a still a large gap between available support and what they actually needed, especially for their elderly lives. Hence, many of these parents expressed their desire to lobby the government to reshape the structure to secure a better future for themselves and other Shidu parents.

As I have emphasised, the ideal support for these Shidu parents largely derived from the sense of reciprocity (Godelier, 1999; Mauss, 2000). As such, many of the interviewees tended to see the governmental support is built on a basis of a reciprocal relationship between themselves and the government. As revealed in many accounts, these Shidu parents felt that in being subject to the One-Child Policy they had made a considerable, 'sacrifice' for their government:

> *My husband and I really wanted to have another child, but because of the policy we had to give up the idea. I had abortions four times and I really sacrificed a lot for the policy and the country. (Nie)*

In so doing, many parents agreed that the government was responsible for providing support as an exchange or compensation for their 'sacrifice' and the unforeseen consequences of their child loss. Most wanted the government to provide more intensive and comprehensive support that focused on their elderly care, which was their greatest concern for their ongoing lives. Indeed, many recounted promises the government used to reassure parents' worries about their elderly care during the government's campaign in the early period of the One Child Policy:

> *When the government was promoting the One-Child Policy, it promised 'It is better to have only one child as the government will provide elderly care to parents'. So, the government should invest more to provide good support for our elderly lives. (Zhang)*

However, one Shidu mother from Shanghai I interviewed had no expectation on elderly care from the government, since her wealthy and westernised background had enabled her to develop a sense of autonomy and individuality in her life, in general and regarding elderly care, in particular:

My husband and I are open-minded, we never wanted to rely on anyone for our elderly lives, even not on my daughter… Even before my daughter passed away, we had already made a good plan for our old age, which is to go to a private and comfortable care home. I don't think we need the actual support from the government as we are able to look after ourselves. (Shang)

However, this mother also urged the government for more intensive and direct support to those Shidu parents in a disadvantageous position, who from the interviews would appear to large in number:

When the family-planning committee officials come to visit, I always tell them the importance of enhancing support to deprived Shidu parents, who are really desperate about their future lives. (Shang)

In relation to these expectations, the government has been gradually enhancing its focus on improving the support structure for Shidu parents and primarily has focused on financial assistance. One government official, who worked in a local Health and Family Planning Commission [11] explained the development of the financial support when she was present in an interview in order to reassure the interviewees:

It has increased a lot. In the past, the financial aid was only about CNY400 per year, then it was increased to CNY 1100 a year when I started my work in this position. Since then, the amount has been raised little by little every year. Last year (2015), the aid suddenly jumped from CNY4500 to CNY9000 a year. Besides the aid, they are also given food and other daily necessities during national holidays. (Jiedao)

Furthermore, sub-district offices, which are the smallest governmental administrative divisions in urban areas (Joseph, 2014), might also employ third sector social work services to enhance the

[11] It is a regional office of the National Health and Family Planning Commission, a government body which regulates the public health, family-planning and the development of the traditional Chinese medicines. Before 2013, the Family-Planning Committee was responsible for the implementation, regulation and administration of the family-planning (the so-called One Child Policy) and this was merged with the NHFPC in 2013.

everyday experiences of Shidu parents' lives. For example, in Hefei City, the capital city of Anhui Province in eastern China, a social work service centre was employed by a sub-district office to provide daily support to elderly parents, who had either lost their only child or had an only child, who was also disabled. For those parents who had registered their situation with the sub-district office, both emotional and practical support was available from social workers on a daily basis. Hence, many Shidu parents had the opportunity to receive some relief and assistance for their current lives. However, I also found that social work support alone could not solve the issue of elderly care in the long-term:

> *I would never have been so positive as now, if the social work centre didn't organise so many events for us… We are really grateful to the social work service, but we still have our concerns about our elderly care… all Shidu families have lost one member in the family, who can't be really replaced by social workers. (Lü)*

In contrast to the positive feedback on the social work service, some parents expressed their doubts about or resistance to social workers, because of the sensitive nature of being Shidu, limitations of social work and the fundamental concern with elderly care:

> *More and more Shidu parents are in need of support, but some of these parents have refused social workers. First, social workers may ask Shidu parents to recall traumatic memories; second, social workers have to take care of a lot of cases, so sometimes they have to close a case quickly without giving continuous support to the parents; third, social workers can't be a permanent solution for Shidu parents' elderly lives. (Shang)*

In relation to the gradually changing support from the government, many Shidu parents noticed improvements:

> *To be honest, the government policies are getting better now. (Jianyi)*

However, there was a considerable discrepancy between Shidu parents' high expectations and the actual government support. As a result, many of them showed dissatisfaction with the current level of support:

> *The slogan advocated governmental responsibility for One-Child parents' elderly care. Now we are really in need of support, but where is the support? (Qi)*

Sometimes, their dissatisfaction could turn to anger and a desire to do something drastic:

> *It has been 10 years since my son was gone, but no one from the local community organisation has ever called me to ask if I am alright… Sometimes, I am even thinking I would blow up the office building of the office one day. (Xu)*

Furthermore, there are huge regional gaps in the quality and intensity of support that local authorities can offer to their residents. Since the late 1970s, the Chinese government has slowly been expanding its economic reforms from south to north and from east to west. As a result, it has created huge economic inequalities between developed and developing regions as well as between urban and rural areas (Moise, 2013). For example, the national standard for monthly financial aid, which comes from the central government budget, is CNY 340 in urban and CNY 170 in rural areas (National Health and Family Planning Commission, 2013) . In addition to national aid, local authorities are also able to use their local government budgets to increase financial aid as well as include other types of support. One Shidu father from a developing region complained:

> *How much support we can receive is up to the local government. In the developed areas along the east coast, they have a better economy, so they can provide better financial and other support for Shidu parents… In some affluent cities, they are really doing much better in supporting Shidu families in various ways. (Zhang)*

Even in the same region (province), the provincial policies for supporting Shidu parents might also be implemented differently across different cities, as explained by the government official mentioned above:

> *The support system is not well-established in small towns… it seems (government) staff in small towns either have less access to support policies or resist devoting themselves to the support. (Jiedao)*

In addition to the regional gap, there are also discrepancies between different age groups, especially regarding those under and over 49 years old, which is the legal age of entitlement to government support (National Population and Family Planning Commission and Ministry of Finance, 2007). As addressed by an 'unofficially' entitled Shidu parent:

> *I still can't see the point of differentiating Shidu parents by age. Parents who are below 49 years old are not eligible for the government aid and support, but they also lost their only child and they may have more to cope with. It is just not fair. (Jishui)*

By confronting the limitations and inequalities in government support, as reported by both the media and academia (Xie and Ding, 2015), many Shidu parents showed their determination and solidarity in negotiating with the government as well as with local authorities for a more efficient support system for their ongoing lives.

As explained above, these Shidu parents felt that central government was responsible for their difficult life circumstances, particularly the head office of the National Health and Family Planning Commission in Beijing. Consequently, many of them had tried to open a direct dialog with the central state as a means of promoting their concerns:

> *As a leader of the Shidu parents in this city, who try to appeal to the central government in Beijing, I think it is essential to negotiate with them as it is a way in which we can fundamentally change the current situation. (Qi)*

More specifically, as revealed by the interviews, signing and presenting petitions to the Beijing government was a controversial means of appealing to policy makers. Indeed, many parents from

the interviews and their Shidu friends had already participated in this kind of activity to some extent:

> *On 15th April 2016, thousands of Shidu parents across the country went to Beijing to negotiate with the state (the family planning commission) for their rights. (Hao)*

So far, Shidu parents from different provinces and regions have organised a number of petitions in Beijing to deliver their concerns to policy makers. In some negotiations, they articulated their difficulties and suggested solutions through documents by focusing on a range of different areas, with primary being attention paid to the issues of Shidu parents' elderly lives and care. As shown below, there are some extracts from some documents signed by signed by Shidu parents across the country:

> *We asked for financial aid to Shidu parents to be increased in line with the average wages in the country… Many Shidu parents do not have any immediate family. However, hospitals require the signature of immediate family before they conduct any surgery. As a result, it has caused delays in the treatment of Shidu parents. Therefore, there is a need to build up a guarantor system for Shidu parents in hospitals.*
>
> *(*From *a document called 'Petitions from Shidu Parents')*

> *We asked them to build dedicated care homes for Shidu parents. Due to our special circumstances, we are not able to have a normal elderly life as others do. It is too upsetting, if we see other elderly people being surrounded by their children and grandchildren in front of us.*
>
> *(*From *a document called 'Our Petitions')*

> *Due to the special circumstances of Shidu parents, the government should build up a palliative care system for Shidu parents. When they are leaving this world, they should still feel loved and supported by their society.*

*(*From *a document called 'the Call for Implementing Government Support for Shidu Families)'*

As can be seen from the above, many Shidu parents have sought solutions for securing the stability of their daily life and most importantly, for their old age, through negotiation with central government. In addition, participating in making petitions has not been the only means of attempting to reshape national policies, for some interviewees chose their own ways of joining the movement:

> *Although I am not involved in any kinds of negotiations with the state, it doesn't mean I don't support them… I always send my support to them. (Hao)*

Apart from the negotiation with central government, a number of Shidu parents have also tried to reshape support and policies at the local level. According to the China Population and Family Planning Law in 2002, the local government has the obligation to provide support and aid to Shidu families. Accordingly, the Shidu parents from the interviews also sought support from their local authorities to improve the quality of their ongoing lives:

> *I want to bring Shidu families in the city together to support each other. It is what I want to do now… we did talk to staff from the local Health and Family Planning Commission. However, the family planning staff told us the state has not released any relevant policies, so they could not give us any reply at the moment. (Hao)*

Whilst the negotiation with government bodies has gradually been reshaping the support structure for Shidu parents by moving it in the right direction, many Shidu parents who joined the movement have had to face political challenges and pressures. For instance, this could happen in the workplace, particularly when working for a public organisation:

> *I work for the national railway. My supervisors have told me many times that if I were to give up leading the petition, my work unit would help me apply for higher financial aid and provide a flat for me to live in; otherwise, they would fire me. (Qi)*

Sometimes, the pressure could also affect these parents' daily lives. For example, a Shidu father who had joined the allies for petitions several times, reported:

> *It seems the local authority is censoring my whereabouts. Whenever I was trying to buy a train ticket (in China, people have to use their ID card to purchase train tickets), the officials always call to ask me where I am going. (Jishui)*

Regardless of these external challenges and pressure, the Shidu parents I approached insisted on their beliefs by continuing their negotiation with the government. In so doing, they aimed not only to improve support for themselves, but also to meet their obligation as a 'family member' of the 'larger family' of Shidu parents as a whole:

> *What I am doing now is not only for myself, but also for other "brothers" and "sisters". We all lost our only child, so we should stay together as a "bigger family". (Qi)*

To sum up, many of the Shidu parents from the interviews tended saw the government as a fundamental source for more comprehensive, intensive and continuous support in various aspects of their ongoing lives due to the 'sacrifices' they had endured for the policy. In losing an only child and the primary caregiver, they inevitably lost their attachment figure and security for their future lives. Further, the policy had undermined or even overturned their sense of themselves as parents and as interdependent beings. Whilst the Shidu parents were not expecting to recover their parenthood from the government, they felt they could at least regain their interdependency in their practical lives by receiving support from the government, whom they had supported by accepting the One Child Policy. Furthermore, in negotiations with both central government and local authorities, these parents were not only reshaping current support policies and structures, but also developing a sense of belonging to the entire group of Shidu parents, which was often referred to as the "larger family".

Compared with Shidu parents' need for support, that provided by central government still remained limited and mainly focused on financial relief, while regional support showed great variation, with the thus being strong concern about regional gaps. Facing such a discrepancy

between expectations and reality, many Shidu parents were taking various actions have an impact on reshaping the current social security and welfare system. Despite some of them having to face political pressures and challenges, they were still determined to continue their negotiations as the means of improving the current support structures and further recovering their ongoing lives as interdependent beings.

4. Conclusion

Based on the reported experiences of these Shidu parents, an only child in the family could be largely involved in the parents' everyday lives. Given the nature of having an only child, the parents from the interviews reported an intimate and interdependent relationship, more importantly, an exclusive parenthood with their child in their everyday lives. Through exchanging support and sharing responsibilities, the Shidu parents did not only largely built their sense of meaning onto their parenthood from various aspects of life, but also placed high expectations on the continuity of such parenthood in their old age. However, in facing their child loss and therefore becoming childless, these parents strongly highlighted multiple-dimensional challenges to their current as well as their elderly lives. In China, the family is not only a source of emotional support but also a key institute for providing practical support (Park and Chesla, 2007; Slote and De Vos, 1998). This context was reinforced by an undeveloped social security system, in which the notion of 'good parenthood' includes the expectation that parents and child commit to a frequent and intensive inter-generational exchange of care and support in various aspects of their lives. Therefore, for these parents, their bereavement was not only to adjust the child loss to their ongoing lives, but was also largely associated with seeking support for a more secured old age.

Following their child loss, as conveyed, these Shidu parents did not only tend to maintain their parenthood through preserving an ongoing relationship with their deceased child, but also tried to define their parental roles through developing relationships with other young people and sometimes with grandchildren if any. Along with defining parental roles, Shidu parents also purposively sought meaning within their social circles by developing their relationships with

family members, friends, others in society and even pets. Although relationships with others in general were likely to motivate Shidu parents to move forward in their lives, it shows that the sense of family in particular provided a strong sense of motivation and meaning. Moreover, by having the elderly care as the greatest concern, the parents also strongly conveyed their motivation and actual actions to negotiate with self-resources, family, social organisations, and particularly, with the government for a more secured and meaningful elderly life. Some of the parents were also motivated to recover their predominant sense of being part of a family by constructing a larger 'family' with other Shidu parents.

Therefore, losing an only child and a primary caregiver inevitably threatened Shidu parents' taken-for-granted world, leading to a loss of meaning and an unsecured elderly life. In response, as shown in the data, the Shidu parents sought support from different sources by engaging in various activities. In so doing, these parents were motivated to recover a sense of parenthood and interdependence in their ongoing lives, especially, when it comes to their concern with elderly care. In other words, Shidu parents' primary motivation was to find ways of recovering what they could of their identity as interdependent parents in order to adapt to the loss of their only child in their ongoing lives, including their old age.

Part Three: Discussion and conclusion

Following the analysis of bereavement narratives from Britain, Japan, China and the group of Shidu parents, this part focuses on motivation in bereavement in the four different socio-cultural contexts. In so doing, it illustrates how these bereaved people made sense of their experience through negotiating the norms and values of their society and culture. By highlighting the primary sense of meaning in each context, I argue how these socio-culturally constructed meanings shaped and subsequently, were integrated into the bereaved person's thoughts and actions in bereavement. I also explain how they drew on both conventional and more alternative resources available in society to seek further meaning in their lives. More specifically, a comparative framework is applied in order to shed further light on the role of motivation in bereavement from the perspectives of bereaved people from Britain, Japan and China, including Shidu parents, as a distinct case within Chinese society. In so doing, I argue that motivation provides a key concept to illustrate bereavement, as both a common human experience and a specific socio-cultural construction.

Chapter 8

Discussion: motivation in bereavement from a cross-cultural perspective

Introduction

In the previous four analysis chapters, the reported bereavement experiences have been analysed as being socially and culturally constructed from a motivational perspective. That is to say, the reported experiences were strongly shaped by the bereaved people's motivation, which was to recover the meaning in their ongoing lives following the loss of a loved one. As suggested by the accounts, the meaning embedded in the bereaved people's lives was profoundly shaped by their socio-cultural environment, reflecting the predominant values and norms within the context. That is, the bereaved people from the different contexts in these empirical chapters showed how they were motivated by the distinctive meaning, which was socio-culturally defined, to make sense of their loss and to recover their ongoing lives as orderly and meaningful (Attig, 2011; Parkes, 1988; Walter, 1996). By building on the analysis of the bereavement experiences from Britain, Japan, China and the Chinese group of Shidu parents, this chapter provides a sociological discussion of motivation in bereavement from a cross-cultural perspective.

1. Motivation in bereavement

In a sociological sense, motivation can be interpreted as a social tool or procedure connecting individual experience and socio-culturally defined meaning in life (Blum and McHugh, 1971; Schutz, 1974). Thus, motivation enables individuals to find meaning in their experiences and justify their actions in their ongoing lives. In order to make life meaningful and consistent, individuals are motivated to interact with society through accepting, adapting, revising or even rejecting socio-cultural norms. However, in living and interacting with others in society, an

individual's meaning in life is also constructed by absorbing certain values and norms from the wider society (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). Therefore, how someone understands his or her experiences, including interpersonal relationships as well as themselves will reflect both predominant socio-cultural values and norms and how these are shaped by their own personal agenda.

As conveyed in the data, the motivation of bereaved people is primarily associated with how to recover meaning in their ongoing lives following loss. As someone close, the deceased was reported to represent an important part of the bereaved person's sense of meaning before death, that had been used by the latter to perceive his or her experiences and define him/herself. Further, the social background also greatly contributed to how the bereaved person understood his or her life experiences and defined him/herself in relation to the deceased. However, in facing experiences of losing such someone close, the bereaved person's sense of meaning and the identity, that were once taken for granted in the everyday life, could be greatly challenged or even overturned (Attig, 2011; Parkes, 1988). Hence, in order to continue their everyday life as meaningful and consistent (Schutz, 1974), he or she was motivated to make sense of their loss and recover meaning in his or her ongoing life. Such motivation enabled the bereaved person to exercise his or her agency to negotiate with their socio-cultural environment by drawing on available resources to serve his or her own ends.

Given the diverse experiences reported in the data, the bereaved people's thoughts and actions were shaped by their own sense of meaning. This not only differed between individual bereaved people, but also contained a diversity of sub-meanings within each individual account. As explained in chapter 1, human motivation refers to a hierarchical structure of meaning, thus emphasising how different sub-meanings are shaped and integrated by a fundamental system meaning (Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Schutz, 1970; 1974). Accordingly, as shown in their accounts, these bereaved people tended to engage with different phenomena in order to make sense of their experiences and justify their thoughts and actions in different circumstances. For example, in facing the dying of a family member, the bereaved person might be motivated to negotiate with different parties to try and dignify a difficult and painful dying. In particular, that person could end up redefining his or her family relationships following the loss. As shown in the

above two examples, whilst the bereaved person was motivated by different purposes in each of these, his or her commitments were both concerned with a more fundamental sense of motivation, which was to restore their ongoing life as orderly and meaningful despite the loss. Hence, these bereaved people, whilst having various experiences of bereavement, were each motivated by some fundamental meaning, which shaped sub-meanings and integrated their everyday experiences.

Meanwhile, as suggested by the accounts from the four different contexts, such meanings were also shaped by what their society and groups valued and expected. Furthermore, in the context of the hierarchical structure of motivation, the sub-meanings given to the bereaved person's everyday experiences reflected socio-cultural values and norms. In turn, these were shaped and integrated by a more fundamental meaning that was also socio-culturally defined. When looking at the socio-culturally specific experiences from the accounts, the bereaved people from each of the four contexts strongly conveyed how their fundamental sense of meaning reflected the values and expectations shared within each context. Broadly speaking, bereaved people in Britain showed a sense of autonomy and independence in their bereavement; the Japanese reported their ongoing lives in conjunction with a strong sense of interdependence as well as the competing sense of individuality in Japan; Chinese people illustrated their bereavement experiences as being shaped by the primary reciprocity defined by family values; and Shidu parents predominantly emphasised their sense of interdependent parenthood in their ongoing lives of being childless. In order to explore the motivation of the bereaved people in each context in greater detail, the following four sections discuss how these bereaved people were motivated to recover their fundamental meaning in life by drawing on different discourses common to that context.

1.1 Motivation in bereavement in Britain

As individuals strongly imbued with the social values of individuality and diversity, the bereaved interviewees in Britain showed a strong sense of recovering autonomy and individual agency as a primary motivation during the different periods of their bereavement. As conveyed in the

interviews, the deceased was often reconstructed as an independent and capable individual before death, being subsequently conjured up in the form of an autonomous being after death. Moreover, the image of the deceased before death could also contribute to intimate and independent relationships between him or her and the bereaved. Further, such relationships before death could be closely integrated into the bereaved person's sense of meaning in relation to respecting and supporting agency and individuality. Indeed, the sense of autonomy and individual agency as a primary concern could significantly shape the bereaved person's life before as well as after his or her loss. Following the loss of a loved one as an important source for the primary meaning in life, how to recover and maintain the meaning could serve as the key motivation that shaped the person's bereavement in terms not only redefining the relationship with the deceased, but also making sense of various experiences in his or her ongoing life.

With regards to recalling the dying process and the death itself, some interviewees reported how their sense of meaning was challenged by the deceased's deteriorating body functions and declining autonomy. Moreover, they also drew upon social scripts, such as medical knowledge, individualism and/or naturalistic discourses, to make sense of and justify experiences of dying and death so as to restore a sense of individuality and autonomy regarding the deceased as well as for him/herself. Following the dying and death, as shown in the accounts, the bereaved also had to adjust to the physical absence of the deceased and carry on with life. To this end, they drew on and personalised religious beliefs, supernaturalism or other discourses to recover the agency and individuality of the deceased as well as reconstructing a continuing and interactive relationship with that person. Moreover, he or she sought support from different sources to rebuild everyday life as being orderly and meaningful. Furthermore, living in an individualistic society, the bereaved person was reported as being able to access a range of social support offered by the broader society to compensate for the decreasing influence of traditions and communities. However, as an individual, the he or she was more likely to adopt self-resources to deal with changes, thus reflecting the sense of autonomy and competence in his or individual life. Apart from the self, family also played a significant role in supporting many of the bereaved people's recovery of meaning for life. That is, through providing and receiving support from

family members, the bereaved could redefine him/herself as a confident, capable and self-determined individual within that institution. In sum, the experiences of the interviewed bereaved people were substantially shaped by the fundamental motivation of recovering a sense of autonomy and individuality, qualities that are strongly valued in British society.

1.2 Motivation in bereavement in Japan

Given Japan is a largely traditional, but also postmodern society, the interviewees conveyed a strong sense of interdependence and social harmony in shaping their bereavement experiences. However, some Japanese interviewees showed a more mixed picture by interweaving the traditions and more individualistic values to restore meaning in their ongoing lives. More specifically, living in a predominantly relational society, the Japanese bereaved people tended to build their everyday lives, including the relationships with the deceased and others, on social conformity and interpersonal harmony. When reporting their ongoing lives surrounding the loss of their loved one, the Japanese interviewees conveyed how their sense of interdependence was constructed, challenged and recovered. Furthermore, in spite of interdependence being conveyed as a primary concern in the interviews, some people were motivated to pursue both relational and individualistic values in their bereavement.

By looking at the detailed experiences reported by these Japanese bereaved interviewees, their thoughts and actions can be seen to be predominantly shaped by their sense of interdependence at different points in their going lives. As evidenced, the relationship with the deceased was often strongly based on intimate interactions and mutual obligations. In close conjunction with such a relationship, the bereaved people tended to construct a strong sense of interdependence in terms of developing reciprocal and other-orientated relationships as well as interpersonal harmony in various aspects of their lives. However, when facing loss, these interviewees found the suffering and disruptive nature of dying and death could challenge the meaningfulness of their lives by threatening the reciprocity and interrupting the harmonious atmosphere. Whilst some interviewees sought to make sense of the person's dying and death through recovering interdependence and social harmony as their primary motivation, others found that developing

a sense of individuality enabled them to recover meaning. Furthermore, living with loss as part of the ongoing life, the interdependence with others could continue playing a significant role in shaping the interviewees' thoughts and actions in relation to how they dealt with the various impacts, organised the funeral, preserved continuing bonds as well as continued their ongoing lives. In order to recover and maintain interdependence, many of the bereaved people not only drew on traditional spirituality and religious beliefs to continue interactions with their deceased loved one, but also tried to seek support from and take responsibilities for family members and other people as a strong sense of meaning in their ongoing lives. Meanwhile, some interviewees turned from seeking interdependence to developing individuality by drawing on more postmodern and western values. As a result, the diverse picture of how these bereaved people made sense of their ongoing lives has shown how they negotiated competing values to serve such meaning-making. Nonetheless, ongoing relationships of reciprocity with the deceased and interdependence with others were predominately reported as the primary motivation shaping their ongoing lives.

1.3 Motivation in bereavement in China

Living in Chinese society, which emphasises interdependence and prioritises groups over individuals, as illustrated in their accounts, the focal bereaved people had largely built their everyday lives on the sense of reciprocity within the family context. As the primary source for support across different life aspects, it has been long defined by the traditional values, such as the Confucian ethics, in relation to exchanging support and sharing responsibilities with other family members. Accordingly, the accounts from these Chinese bereaved people strongly conveyed themselves as interdependent people, being part of the family. That is to say, the reciprocal and family-centred sense of meaning had been primarily applied by these bereaved people to understand and justify their daily experiences as well as to define themselves.

As evidenced in the Chinese narratives, bereaved people's everyday lives before their loss were largely lived with the deceased within the family by sharing support and care. Hence, the loss could considerably threaten the bereaved people's reciprocal relationship with the deceased, as

well as their relationships with the entire family, within which that person used to play a significant role. When facing dying, death and life without the deceased, the priority shown by these Chinese people was to maintain the reciprocity with the deceased and other family members. Many sought to maintain the sense of shared care and responsibilities with the deceased, whilst repositioning themselves within the family by reinforcing the relationships with other family members. In order to do so, they committed to various thoughts and actions by negotiating with different resources in society, especially those within the family. Living with the physical absence of the deceased, the Chinese narrators tended to maintain the interdependent and interactive relationship with him or her by adopting the ancestral traditions. In addition, they also tried to redefine relationships with other family members to recover the stability and solidarity of family as the primary source for meaning in their ongoing lives. As such, these reported experiences have illustrated how the sense of the reciprocity and being part of the family shaped was integrated into these Chinese bereaved people's ongoing lives.

1.4 Motivation of Shidu parents

As a group from Chinese society, the Shidu parents broadly expressed their primary concerns in terms of the reciprocity and the emphasis on family values. However, compared to other Chinese bereaved people, these parents were faced with the unique circumstance of becoming childless, which meant they were experiencing overturned parenthood and an insecure future for their old age. Regarding the nature of having an only child in China, these Shidu parents reported an exclusive relationship with him or her in terms of not only exchanging support and care in everyday life, but also placing high expectations for a good elderly life supported by him or her. Hence, as shown in the interviews, the Shidu parents' sense of interdependent parenthood was deeply embodied in their identities and integrated as part of their ongoing lives before child loss. Indeed, the death of their only child could fundamentally challenge their interdependent being, overturn their parenthood and further threaten their old age security. However, these Shidu parents in the interviews still predominantly conveyed their primary motivation to recover their

interdependent parental roles and the sense of family, which comprehensively and continuously shaped and integrated these parents' various responses to their bereavement.

As could be seen in the quotes, these bereaved parents were faced with extremely difficult situations of losing the only source for parenthood and an important one for interdependent support. Having this experience, they were motivated to recover their parenthood and the reciprocity of care and support in their ongoing lives, such as, by maintaining bonds with their deceased child, taking care of their grandchild, seeking other young adults as their 'child' as well as negotiating with personal networks and broader society to reshape support patterns and structures. Furthermore, living in Chinese society with little support, these parents not only used available support in pre-existing social contexts, but also actively sought different ways of improving their surroundings to recover their sense of being a parent and an interdependent being. For example, whilst social environments were unsupportive to Shidu parents, some of them were able to create their own that was more supportive and family-like to compensate for the lack of emotional and practical assistance elsewhere. Many of them actively engaged with the broader society, especially, with the government, with the aim of improving the broader structure of support and care, which would allow them to recover their sense of identity. In order to reach a wider range of resources in society, many Shidu parents used the internet as a key tool to access individuals and social groups to seek more support, both emotional and practical. In addition, these parents' participation in the interviews, itself also showed their motivation, which was to raise their voice in the broader society so as to receive more attention and support for themselves as well as the bigger community of Shidu parents. Through this process, eventually, they could recover the sense of their interdependent parenthood in their social circles. In sum, being motivated by the sense of being a parent and having an interdependent relationship with their child, Shidu parents pursued various ideas and actions by interacting with different people in varying situations and dimensions of their ongoing lives. Moreover, whilst serving different purposes, all these different ideas and actions contributed, to a varying extent, to recovering the sense of being an interdependent parent, which had been shattered by losing their only child.

2. Motivation across socio-cultural contexts

As shown above, the primary sense of meaning attached to the motivation of bereaved people was largely shaped by the socio-cultural values and norms in each context. Accordingly, this section compares motivation and experiences across the reported experiences of bereaved people in Britain, Japan and China, as well as, between the Chinese bereaved people in general and the Shidu parents in particular. In so doing, I aim to clarify how motivation in bereavement could differ not only across cultures, but also within.

2.1 Motivation and bereavement between Britain, Japan and China

Whilst bereavement was commonly reported as a distressing and disruptive experience requiring various commitments to deal with, the bereaved people from Britain, Japan and China presented distinctive pictures of their experiences, being motivated differently by their primarily sense of meaning. Considering the bereavement as part of everyday life, these bereaved people's motivation had been closely associated with the construction and recovering of their primary sense of meaning in different stages of their ongoing lives, including before, at and after death.

Before death

As shown in the accounts for the three different cultures, the bereaved people's sense of meaning had been largely constructed in conjunction with their loved one. In the more individualistic British society, bereaved interviewees tended to see themselves as autonomous and independent beings, a perception that was largely shaped and reinforced by the intimate relationship with their loved one. Accordingly, when recalling their experiences before their loss, the British bereaved people often highlighted the deceased as an autonomous and capable being, who developed intimacy with them by greatly respecting and supporting their own autonomy and individual agency. In comparison, the Japanese and Chinese bereaved people were more likely to define themselves as interdependent when describing their relationships with the deceased and others. In Japan, the interdependent relationship was largely defined by

exchanging support and giving priority to each other, whilst in China, the interdependence was even stronger regarding the family context, in which the deceased was considered as a key source for the reciprocity of sharing support and responsibilities. In sum, the bereaved people in the three contexts tended to reconstruct their relationship with the deceased with reference to a strong sense of autonomy, interdependence and familial reciprocity, respectively.

At dying and death

Whilst the experiences of losing a loved were predominantly reported as negative, the bereaved people often tried to recover from the disruption caused by the process of dying and the reality of death by seeking meaning to justify their experiences. As emphasised by the bereaved people in Britain, dying and death were perceived as threats to the individuality and agency of their loved one. Thus, they were often motivated to dignify the dying and death by emphasising independence and restoring the autonomy of both themselves and the deceased. Conversely, the experiences of losing a loved one in Japan and China were often defined as difficult and bad, if the dying and death broke the interpersonal harmony and challenged their interdependence with the deceased by causing suffering and disruption to their loved one. In response, they tended to reinforce their support for and care towards the deceased before death and to recover the harmonious atmosphere at dying and death. However, sometimes they could also weaken or even neglect the individuality and agency of their loved one. For example, the bereaved people in Japan and China were more likely to determine to conceal a terminal prognosis from the dying person in order to maintain a more peaceful atmosphere and harmonious relationships.

After death

In the ongoing life following the death of their beloved, the experiences of the bereaved people were largely shaped by how to face and deal with the loss and its impact, as well as, how to recover meaning to continue their lives. As explained earlier, on the one hand, the bereaved people in Britain had largely maintained their autonomy in their ongoing lives, in which their relationship with the deceased was redefined as intimate but independent. On the other hand,

the Japanese and Chinese bereaved people were shaped by their predominant sense of interdependence in relation to maintaining the reciprocity with the deceased. Hence, many people from Japan and China reported their regret and guilt in their bereavement, due to concerns with failing to fulfil their responsibilities for the deceased.

Furthermore, the funeral as a key transition following loss, was highlighted in the British and Japanese interviews. As conveyed by the bereaved people in Britain, this was largely personalised to highlight the individuality and agency of the deceased and sometimes the bereaved. In addition, the Japanese funeral was predominantly formalised by prescribed rituals and customs, although a few Japanese bereaved adopted a more personalised form of funeral by emphasising individual values and one person did not even have one. However, compared with the people in Britain and Japan, the Chinese bereaved people did not raise the funeral as a significant experience in their bereavement, due to the restricted individual agency and the largely simplified funeral procedures.

Regarding the overall experience of bereavement, the family from all three cultures was reported as an important source where the bereaved people sought for meaning for all three cultures, but this variant in its form. For the bereaved people in Britain and Japan, the family was an important source for seeking emotional support and meaning in their ongoing lives, although the latter were more likely to recover their interdependence from the family than the former. Compared with the people from the other two cultures, the Chinese bereaved people tended to see family as the primary source for support and meaning in various aspects of their lives. Hence, they were more likely to motivated to recover their sense of being part of the family as an important part of their meaning making in bereavement.

2.2 Motivation and bereavement between general Chinese and Shidu parents

Regardless of living in the same society, the Chinese people, who were bereaved from different types of death, and the Shidu parents conveyed different kinds of motivation in their bereavement. Whilst both cohorts had developed a strong sense of interdependence and family

values with their loved one, the Shidu parents had developed an exclusive parenthood with their child before death, rather than a broader sense of being part of family. Furthermore, whilst the Chinese bereaved people, including the Shidu parents, tended to see family as the primary source for support in everyday lives, the latter also placed high expectations on their only child for support in their old age, which were hard to fulfil. Rather, the reality of becoming childless meant that many parents found that parenthood and their old age security could hardly be replaced and recovered. As a result, compared with other Chinese bereaved people, the Shidu parents I interviewed were faced with more issues and challenges in their current as well as their future lives. In order to recover their interdependent parenthood and to secure their ongoing lives, as clearly shown in their accounts, these Shidu parents conveyed their stronger motivation to negotiate with the external society, particularly the government, in comparison with other types of bereaved people in China. By so doing, their bereavement was not only shaped by the sense of interdependence and family values, but was also strongly concerned with how to maintain their parenthood and recover interdependent support and care for their elderly lives.

3. Motivation in bereavement as a socio-cultural construction

By comparing and interpreting the reported experiences from the four contexts, I have illustrated how these bereaved people were motivated differently in order to deal with their loss and further to continue their ongoing lives. As mentioned above, the motivation itself is seen as a social device that ascribes meaning to individual experience and actions (Blum and McHugh, 1971). However, the meaning attached to motivation, as demonstrated throughout this study, was undoubtedly a social-cultural product reflecting the values and norms widely shared within the context. Furthermore, not only was the meaning socially defined, but how the meaning was applied to real life was also closely associated with social structures. That is to say, being motivated by their sense of meaning, bereaved people tended to negotiate with their social environment by drawing on available social discourses. As such, how the bereaved were motivated to apply meaning was also shaped by the socio-cultural context. Therefore, motivation

in bereavement, through which bereaved people attribute meaning to their experience by interacting with their society, is a social construction.

Chapter 9

Conclusion: motivation, bereavement and everyday life

This thesis reports on findings from a set of qualitative data of bereaved people's everyday experiences from three contrasting cultures, including a special group of Shidu parents in China, with particular focus on their motivation from a sociological perspective. The original idea of conducing this research was inspired by the diversity of experiences involved in people's bereavement. As a distressing and sometimes even devastating life event, losing a loved one, as can be seen from the above chapters, is likely to disrupt the order of bereaved people's ongoing lives and challenge their meaning in various aspects of their life. Although it seems loss could strongly undermine bereaved people's motivation, the data have shown how bereaved people were often motivated to commit to various thoughts and actions to deal with their loss and further continue their lives. In some cases, such as the Shidu parents, they were urged on by their own difficult circumstances to actively seek support from external sources and to overcome challenges to negotiate with the government. In addition, given my personal experiences of living in China, Japan and Britain, I have been struck by the significance and power of the impact of culture on individual experiences, which inevitably include bereavement. Therefore, I decided to dedicate my doctorate study to investigating from a sociological perspective the cross-cultural experiences of bereavement, more particularly, what motivates bereaved people to commit to various things in their ongoing lives after losing a loved. In order to do so, I have discussed my research in the above eight chapters.

In chapter 1, I reviewed relevant literature by reducing the gap between bereavement studies and mainstream motivation research. By looking at studies of grief, mourning and bereavement from individual, public and interpersonal dimensions, I aimed to capture a sense of the purposive behaviour or motivation of bereaved people in the academic discussion. Further, I selectively revisited some mainstream sociological theories to seek how motivation can be explained from a sociological sense and how it can be related to bereavement. In so doing, I have argued there needs to be further sociological research on motivation and bereavement. In chapter 2, I

introduced the background of bereavement research in and between Britain, Japan and China, followed by an introduction to the Shidu phenomenon, which is a little-known topic both to the general public and academics. Based on the theoretical foundation in the first two chapters, chapter 3 explained the methodological approach to this study regarding my philosophical stand point, the research objectives and aims and the data collection and analysis. In chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7, I respectively interpreted reported experiences of the bereaved people from Britain, Japan, China and the group of Shidu parents. By looking at how they reported their bereavement experiences before, at and after death of a loved one, I found that these bereaved people were motivated by their sense of meaning in their ongoing lives. This sense of meaning included, the sense of autonomy and independence in Britain, the primary sense of interdependence mixed with individual values in Japan, the strong sense of reciprocity in being part of family in China, and the interdependent parenthood in the Shidu groups. Further, by looking at how bereaved people's meaning in life was developed, challenged and recovered in relation to the deceased, I have found that the meaning and the motivation of these bereaved people were largely shaped by the socio-cultural context. In chapter 8, I revisited the theoretical foundation of motivation and applied it to the data from the four contexts. Further, I analysed the motivation of bereaved people in each context and compared it across Britain, Japan and China, as well as, between the bereaved Chinese people in general and the Shidu parents in particular. In so doing, I concluded that motivation was a socio-cultural construction in the data.

Based on the above eight chapters, I have shed light on a motivational perspective of bereavement, which involves various thoughts and actions shaped by bereaved people's perception of themselves and their social world. Furthermore, given motivation as a tool of ascribing socio-culturally defined meaning to bereaved people's experiences of social interactions, this study has illustrated that motivation and bereaved people's experiences are both socio-culturally constructed. By studying motivation in bereavement, I have provided a picture of bereaved people's sense of meaning, which was constructed and reconstructed before, at and after death, and their thoughts and actions in their ongoing lives from a socio-cultural perspective. Therefore, an understanding of motivation provides an insight into the dynamics

and diversity of experiences in bereaved people's various aspects of their ongoing lives and further locates bereavement as part of everyday life.

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Appendix

Table 1: Interviews from Britain

No.	NAME	AGE12	GENDER	LOSS	ACCESS
1	Adrian	39	male	father	secondary interview
2	Andy	19	male	father	secondary interview
3	Brian	33	male	grandmother	secondary interview
4	Diane	58	female	mother and grandmother	secondary interview
5	Elisabeth	52	female	husband	secondary interview
6	Julian	40	male	grandfather	secondary interview
7	Lynn	57	male	mother	secondary interview
8	Pat	40	female	aunt	secondary interview
9	Patrick	21	male	father	secondary interview
10	Roy	45	male	father	secondary interview
11	Sarah	22	female	grandparents	secondary interview
12	Stephen	38	male	father	secondary interview
13	Tania	50	female	mother	secondary interview
14	Eleanor & Mike	61 (female) & 57 (male)	couple (male and female)	son	secondary interview

Table 2: Interviews from Japan

12 All the ages of the interviewees were recorded by the time of the interviews.

No.	NAME	AGE	GENDER	LOSS	ACCESS
1	Nanami	20s	female	husband	secondary interview
2	Takara	34	female	husband	secondary interview
3	Sakura	20s	female	mother	secondary interview
4	Akiko	40s	female	mother, father and brother	secondary interview
5	Yui	40s	female	mother, father and sister	secondary interview
6	Harui	60s	male	son	secondary interview
7	Kioshi	30s	male	sister and mother	secondary interview
8	Noriko	29	female	husband	secondary interview
9	Mieka	40s	female	brother	secondary interview
10	Tomoko	20s	female	stillborn	secondary interview
11	Momoka	20s	female	friend	secondary interview
12	Sumiko	20s	female	friend	secondary interview
13	Rin	50s	female	husband	secondary interview
14	Misaki	60s	female	husband	secondary interview
15	Arisu	40s	female	mother and father	secondary interview
16	Izanagi	40s	male	wife	secondary interview

Table 3: Qualitative data from China

No.	NAME	AGE	GENDER	LOSS	METHOD	AREA	ACCESS

1	Deyi	70s	female	husband	face-to-face interview	urban	social worker
2	Lü	late 50s	female	son (only child)	face-to-face interview	urban	social worker
3	Li	70s	female	two sons	face-to-face interview	urban	council staff
4	Wang	60s	female	son (only child)	face-to-face interview	urban	council staff
5	Shi	70s	female	husband	face-to-face interview	urban	council staff
6	Ge	70s	female	husband	face-to-face interview	urban	council staff
7	Guoping	late 50s	male	son (only child)	face-to-face interview	urban	council staff
8	Wu	90s	male	wife	face-to-face interview	urban	council staff
9	Qi	60s	male	son (only child)	face-to-face interview	urban	Self-help group

10	Xiong	60s	male	son (only child)	face-to-face interview	urban	Self-help group
11	Liu & Mai	60s	couple	daughter (only child)	face-to-face interview	urban	Self-help group
12	Nie	60s	female	daughter (only child)	group interview	urban	Self-help group
13	Yong	60s	female	daughter (only child)	group interview	urban	Self-help group
14	Jianyi	60s	female	son (only child)	group interview	urban	Self-help group
15	Lin	late 50s	female	son (only child)	group interview	urban	Self-help group
16	Ang	late 50s	male	sister &mother	face-to-face interview	urban	personal network
17	Chao	late 20s	male	mother	face-to-face interview	urban	personal network
18	Zhou	late 50s	female	husband	face-to-face interview	urban	personal network
19	Wan	early 30s	male	father	face-to-face interview	urban	personal network
20	Hao	early 60s	female	daughter (only child)	online interview	urban	internet

21	Xu	60s	male	son (only child)	online interview	urban	internet
22	Zhang	50s	female	daughter (only child)	message interview	urban	internet
23	Hefei	20s-30s	female	little brother	message interview	urban	internet
24	Zhao	20s-30s	male	father	written narrative	urban	Internet
25	Qian	20s-30s	male	grandfather	written narrative	urban	Internet
26	Sun	20s-30s	male	father	written narrative	urban	Internet
27	Chang	20s-30s	female	father	written narrative	urban	Internet
28	Tao	20s-30s	female	grandfather	written narrative	urban	Internet
29	Yuan	60s	female	son (only child)	TV interview	Urban	TV
30	Hou	Early 50s	female	son (only child)	TV interview	Urban	TV
31	Ma	late 50s	male	multiple family members	TV interview	rural	TV